

THE NEW HORIZON

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Netaji's Concept of Leftism

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To

My loving father,

my friend, philosopher and guide, and

*My late beloved mother-the eternal
sources of inspiration.*

PREFACE

In Netaji's political thought the term 'Leftism' should be taken in a peculiar sense. He was not a leftist in the conventional sense of the term. For him the word leftism did not denote any political creed or sectarianism. It implied a rational principle, a political method of attaining his country's independence and of effecting her post-freedom reconstruction on modern line. It was only with the destruction of the British power in India that national freedom or national reconstruction could be realised, according to him. His concept of leftism was from this angle, synonymous with anti-imperialism. It was also a symbol of his protest against the policy of compromise and constitutionalism followed by the Gandhite Congress which should have been replaced, according to him, by an uncompromising, revolutionary, militant, national struggle as the only means to win India's freedom. From this standpoint his idea of leftism was nothing but radicalism.

After freedom his concept of leftism or radicalism was related to his ideas of socialism—his plan of national reconstruction of India on progressive, modern, and scientific lines. His concept of socialism did not subscribe to any conventional form or standard of socialism like Marxism or Communism which he rejected as alien to the Indian soil. It was also not a synthesis between Fascism and Communism, as is alleged by some. It stood for a rational application of socialistic norms and ideals to the fold of the Indian society with an eye to its tradition and requirements.

His concept of leftism was a process of evolution. It started with his policy of swarajism, i.e., support to the swarajist tactics of constitutional obstruction ; - it progressed through a plan and programme of revolutionary radicalism as envisaged by him, and projected in the images of his *Samyavadi Sangha* and Forward Bloc. It reached its climax in the militant nationalist movements under his leadership—the F.I.A. and I.N.A. movements.

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Abbreviations used in the book

F.I.A.—Free India Army

I.N.A.—Indian National Army

N.A.I.—National Archives of India

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PART I

NETAJI IN THE PRE I.N.A.

CHAPTER

Swarajism 1923-26

In the context of the political thought of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose the term 'Leftism' should be taken in a peculiar sense. He was not a Leftist in the conventional sense of the term. For him leftism did not denote any political sectarianism or creed, but a rational principle, a political method of attaining complete independence for his country and of effecting her post-freedom national reconstruction on modern line.

It was only with the destruction of the British power in India, he believed, that national freedom or national reconstruction could be realised. His Leftism was, from this standpoint, synonymous with anti-imperialism. "In the present phase of Indian life," he wrote, "Leftism means anti-imperialism. A genuine anti-imperialist is one who believes in undiluted independence as the political objective and in uncompromising national struggle as the means for attaining it."¹

His leftism was a protest against the policy of compromise and constitutionalism followed by the Gandhite Congress, and that policy, he urged upon the latter, should be replaced by a policy of uncompromising national struggle against the British as the only method likely to achieve India's freedom. From this angle, his leftism was nothing but radicalism. And this radicalism was also related to his ideal of Socialism. "After the attainment of political independence, Leftism will mean," he wrote, "Socialism and the task before the people will then be reconstruction of national life on a socialistic basis."² From this point of view, his leftism was equivalent to Socialism.

Thus his idea of leftism had two phases : the two aspects of his radicalism. "In the present phase of our movement, Leftists will be those who will wage an uncompromising fight with Imperialism. In the next phase of our movement Leftism will be synonymous with Socialism."³

It is against this background that we shall study his concept of leftism, as a process of evolution. In 1923 Deshbandhu founded the Swarajya Party. Subhas Chandra was a member of it and Swarajism was the first phase in the evolution of his theory of radicalism. Its genesis can be found in two factors. It was a rationalist revolt against the spiritual and mystic character of the Gandhi cult. Asceticism and saintliness of the Mahatma transformed him into an 'Avatar' to a large number of people prone to supernaturalism and mysticism. Particularly "the orthodox followers of the Mahatma [began] to regard everything that he said as gospel truth without reasoning or arguing and to accept his paper 'Young India', as their Bible."⁴ Gandhi became their New Messiah. Swarajism was a pragmatic protest against this irrationalism. It was also a radical challenge to the orthodox Gandhism. There was the need of a change in the Congress tactics after the suspension of the Civil-disobedience Campaign by the Mahatma at Bardoli. To arouse once again public enthusiasm suffering a setback in the Bardoli retreat, Deshbandhu C. R. Das devised a new plan of non-co-operation within the legislatures. According to this plan, Congressmen instead of boycotting the elections would stand as candidates at the polls and after capturing the elected seats, would carry on a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent opposition to the Government. On this basis the Swarajist party was formed in 1923. Its tactics was, in the Provincial Legislatures, to attack the ministers and their transferred departments. The salaries of the ministers would be either rejected altogether, in which case no ministers could be appointed at all or votes of no-confidence in the ministers would be moved repeatedly so that no set of ministers could continue in office long. At the same time attempts would be made to throw out the Budget of the transferred departments which could not be restored by certification. By such tactics the Governor of the province would be forced to suspend the working of the transferred departments and take over administration into his own hands. In the Central Province Legislative Council where the Swaraj-

ists had an absolute majority—the entire budget was thrown out without any difficulty and no ministers could, therefore, be appointed. In Bengal, salaries of the ministers were rejected and repeated attempts to restore them proved useless. The ministers had therefore to lay down their office. Thus in the Central Provinces and Bengal, working of the Constitution was made impossible. In 1924 the Swarajists by carrying the fight within legislature were able to wreck the Constitution, in at least some of the provinces.

The Swarjist policy was based on a sound expediency. The Swarajists pointed out that under the Constitution of 1919 there was little scope for any useful work for the ministers. Over and above the handicap that the principal officials working under the ministers could not be subjected to disciplinary action and were independent of the legislature in the matter of their payments, “. . . the unhampered working of the Constitution cannot benefit the country in any way whereas successful obstruction not only brings pressure to bear on the Government by putting obstacles in its path, but also develops a spirit of resistance in the country as whole. As a matter of fact, when the Constitution of the Swarajya Party was first drawn up in March, 1923, it was explicitly stated in the preamble that the objective of the Swarajist policy was to create an atmosphere of resistance to the bureaucracy, without which the government could never be made to respond to popular demands.”⁵

The Mahatma and his followers were, at the outset, strongly opposed to the Swarjist tactics. The main contention of the opponents—the No-changers as they would be so called—“was that the Government of India Act, 1919, hardly left any room for useful opposition within the legislatures owing to the presence of Britishers and of other members nominated by the government, it was difficult, if not impossible, for the elected members to secure a majority either in the Indian Legislative Assembly or in the Provincial Legislatures. Further the Viceroy in the case of the former, and the governors, in the case of the latter, had powers of veto and certification,

whereby they could always override the decision of the legislatures. The reply to this was that even if the elected members did not have a majority, they could still keep up a continuous opposition against the government and thereby strengthen the agitation outside the legislatures. Secondly, it would be possible for the elected members to secure a majority in at least some of the legislatures and if the Viceroy or the Governor set aside the decision of any legislature the Government would stand condemned before the bar of public opinion, both inside India and outside. Lastly, under the existing Constitution, a vote against the Ministers or their departments could not be overridden by the governor of any province, and if the provincial legislature voted down the salaries of Ministers, they would automatically be thrown out of office and the working of the diarchical Constitution would have to be suspended.”⁶

On this line of argument Subhas Chandra answered the criticism of the Swarajist policy of which he was a firm advocate as a Swarajist. Thus Swarajism was a phase in his theory of radicalism. Whether it could also be termed as ‘Leftism’, was a more intricate question.

From three angles it could not be characterized as ‘Leftism’, in the conventional sense of the term.

So far as the composition of the Swarajya Party was concerned, there were both the Rightists and the Leftists in it. “. . . There arose a rationalist revolt against the Mahatma and his philosophy. As the Swarajya Party headed this revolt, elements from the Right and from the Left that were tired of the irrationalism of the Mahatma, were drawn towards it.”⁷ From this standpoint the party could not be called to be purely leftist in character.

Swarajism was, fundamentally, no challenge to Gandhism or to the Congress policy. The fundamental postulates of the Gandhite Congress, were preserved by it, viz., peaceful and legitimate means to attain freedom, non-violence, non-co-operation and Dominion Status. As Deshbandhu pointed out in his Presidential speech at the Gaya Congress in 1923, “Although we differ on the question of programme, all of us are agreed

in the principle of non-violent non-co-operation."⁸ Again, this stand was reiterated at the Allahabad session of the Swarajya Party on 28. 2. 23, when it resolved to accept the Congress creed of attaining Swaraj by legitimate and peaceful means and the principle of non-violent non-co-operation as guiding and shaping its activity.

Thus Swarajism marked no breach with the Congress. It was to work within the Congress, although with a different programme, the basic objective and policy being the same. The difference between the two was a difference not of kind but of degree. The adoption of this new policy, Subhas Chandra himself admitted it, did not imply that they were to abandon any of the other activities of the Congress, but simply meant an extension of those activities to include capture of the elected seats in the legislatures and all public bodies.⁹ Thus Swarajism was nothing but an extension of the Gandhian non-co-operation to non-co-operation within the legislature. The initial opposition of the Mahatma and of the Congress to the Swarajya Party, gradually gave way to a compromise. A compromise resolution was passed at the special Congress Session in Delhi in September, 1923, to the effect that Congressmen were permitted to take part in the forthcoming elections and carry on a uniform, continuous and consistent opposition against the Government within the Legislatures, but the Congress as an organization would have no responsibility in the matter. "It may be," Subhas Chandra tried to account for the Mahatma's change of mind, "that he found the position of the Swarajists too strong in the country to be able to overthrow them, and so he bowed to the inevitable, or it may be that he felt that the changed circumstances in the country warranted a change in tactics."¹⁰

The compromise led to an agreement in February, 1924, —the Gandhi-Das agreement, which provided that the Mahatma was to devote himself to the Khadi Campaign without any intervention from the Congress or the Swarajya Party, and for that purpose was empowered to organise an autonomous body—the All India Spinners' Association. The Swarajya Party on the

other hand, was to be in charge of the political campaign to be conducted by it as an autonomous body independently of the Congress. The alliance thus struck between the Mahatma and the Swarajya Party soon ripened into friendship as a result of conciliatory statements made by the former from time to time. Thus once he said that his conscience was in the keeping of the Swarajists, while on another occasion he said, "I shall cling to the Swarajya Party as a child clings to its mother." Thus Swarajism constituted no opposition to Gandhism or Gandhite Congress. There was no fundamental difference between them, the difference being a question of programme and not one of principle. Nay, whatever difference was there between them, was neutralised by the above process of adaptation of Gandhism to the Swarajism.

Swarajism, therefore, could not be equated with 'Leftism' in the conventional sense of the term, in its relation with the Gandhite Congress. It could be termed 'Leftism' only in the restricted sense of an enlightened criticism of the orthodox and irrational character of Gandhism, demanding revision of the Congress programme on a new line. In fact, Swarajism, should be treated as an experiment in radicalism — the first phase in the evolution of Subhas Chandra's philosophy of radicalism. But it is interesting to note that Subhas Chandra gave up his Council-entry policy and left the Swarajist Camp in 1926. It was not because he had lost faith in the Swarajist principle of constitutional obstruction, but because he had found that the gradual disintegration of the Party since Deshbandhu's demise, had been making it useless by killing its dynamic character. Rightist elements had been able to raise their heads in the Party, communal dissensions were appearing within its fold, and its original policy of undiluted opposition had virtually died out by that time. "I am getting disgusted with the Councils," he wrote to Sarat Chandra Bose on 13. 8. 26, "because I find that people who go there do not mean any tangible work for the country. It is time for the pendulum to swing back in an anti-council direction."¹¹

NOTES

1. Subhas Chandra Bose. *The Indian Struggle*, 1920-42, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, p. 409.
2. *Idem*.
3. *Presidential speech*, All India Anti-compromise Conference, Ramgarh, 19. 3. 40.
4. *The Indian Struggle*, 1920-42, p. 115.
5. *Ibid*, p. 99.
6. *Op, cit.*, p. 79.
7. *Op, cit.*, p. 115.
8. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, II.
9. *Op, cit.*, p. 78.
10. *Op. cit.* p. 102.
11. Subhas Chandra Bose : *Correspondence*, 1924-32. Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1967, p. 219.

CHAPTER. II

Revolutionary Radicalism 1926-39

Subhas Chandra's theory of radicalism from 1926 onward is to be studied under two aspects : as an end and as a means to an end.

He stood for complete independence of his country. Since the very birth of his political consciousness, his bias was for complete independence. Thus in 1914 he thought unto himself that "political freedom was indivisible and meant complete independence of foreign control and tutelage."¹

As a Swarajist also we find him championing the cause of complete independence. But it was partly due to his regard for Deshbandhu, and partly for the sake of unity of the party, that he acquiesced in Deshbandhu's formula of Dominion Status.

The Madras Congress of 1927 was an important landmark in the evolution of Subhas Chandra's radicalism. In his own words, "the Madras Congress may be regarded as standing for a definite orientation towards the Left."² A resolution was passed in the Congress advocating 'independence' and not Dominion Status as the goal of the Congress. The resolution, Subhas Chandra pointed out, was but a logical fulfilment of a process going on within the Congress for a long time in the sense that the Youthful element in the Congress had been demanding a more extremist ideology for some time past and under their influence resolutions had been passed from time to time by Provincial conferences recommending to the Indian National Congress that the goal of the Indian people should be defined as complete national independence.

Subhas Chandra was one of the most outspoken members of this group to voice forth this demand. And he reacted sharply to the recommendation of the Nehru Committee on Dominion Status. It was quite unacceptable to him. "A

private meeting of the Congress Left Wing was therefore held at Lucknow," he writes, "to decide our course of action and . . . I suggested . . . to organise an Independence League in order to carry on an active propaganda in favour of Independence."³ Accordingly, the Independence of India League was founded in November, 1928 to propagate the cause of complete independence as the goal of the Congress.

Again in December 1928, at the Calcutta Congress there was a revolt against Gandhism sponsored by the Independence League on the issue of Independence. Subhas Chandra moved an amendment to this effect on the Mahatma's resolution on Dominion Status. "Even if Dominion Status is conceded today," he declared, "we cannot accept it as a fulfilment of our national demand. We stand for Independence as our immediate objective . . . we are not prepared to lower the flag of Independence even for one single day."⁴

It was followed up by him at the Lahore Congress in 1929, where he defined Swaraj as complete independence implying complete severance of the British connection.⁵

Again, after the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931, he met the Mahatma at Bombay and "after criticising the Pact," he said, "the point that I urged was that we would be prepared to support him as long as he stood for independence—but the moment he gave up that stand, we would consider it our duty to fight him."⁶

In 1933 in his Friars Hall speech in London, he proposed the formation of an All India Party—which he called the Samyavadi Sangha—which would stand for complete and all round freedom of India.⁷

In the editorial of Forward Bloc on 3. 2. 39, he prepared a case against Dominion Status on the following points :

It would not satisfy the aspirations of the awakened masses of the country.

Britain with her prickly conscience of white supremacy would not probably long put up with India's membership of the British Commonwealth and this would place India again in a quandary.

Although Dominions were 'autonomous communities', Britain held the centre of the stage—her moral and political stewardship over the Dominions had not been affected by the Status ; and the scope of India's financial exploitation by her was still open.

Finally, there was nothing to warrant that Britain would shed her imperialist character, after Dominion Status in India. A Socialist India would be incongruous with imperialist Britain. On these grounds Subhas Chandra urged upon the Congress to scrap the idea of Dominion Status, and fight for complete independence.

The same voice was heard from abroad. "This war has been a God-send opportunity to us . . . for achieving not Dominion Status or colonial self-government but full and complete Independence."⁸

Thus Subhas Chandra was throughout a strong champion of complete Independence for his country with regard to his end—he was in this light a radical or a Leftist. As to the means to this end, his ideas were thoroughly radical. This was his theory of revolutionary radicalism—a prolonged process of evolution, passing through different phases, starting with Civil Disobedience and ending with the I. N. A. revolution.

Subhas Chandra had an inherent faith in non-violence which was largely due to the spiritual set-up of his character and ideas. To adduce an instance, we may refer to his addiction to non-violence in his College days, strong opposition to the cult of violence and revolutionary-terroristic movement besieging Calcutta of that time. His faith in non-violence fostered in him a faith in the principle of non-violent non-co-operation. "The best way to end a Government is to withdraw from it," he wrote to Sarat Chandra Bose from Cambridge on 28.4.21, "I say this not because that was Tolstoy's doctrine nor because Gandhi preaches it—but because I have come to believe it"⁹

It was out of this belief that he found that the non-co-operation or Civil Disobedience movement that was launched

in 1920-21 under Gandhi, was the movement best suited to India particularly when India was looking forward to a more radical plan of action and he devoted himself heart and soul to it. Even as a Swarajist he stood for an unambiguous policy of non-violence. Thus he wrote to J. M. Sengupta, "There should be no dual policy—a secret one of violence and an ostensible one of non-violence. The Congress policy excludes violence."¹⁰

Non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience movement according to Subhas Chandra should be based on active resistance, and not on passive resistance as he found the Gandhi movement to resort to. "I believe more than ever that the method should be Satyagraha or non-violent non-co-operation in the widest sense of the term, but Satyagraha as I understand it, is not merely passive resistance, but active resistance as well."¹¹

Passive resistance, to him, was to be completely ineffective. In fact it had been proved to be so. "The peaceful meetings, processions and demonstrations that have been held during the last few years, in spite of the official ban, show a spirit of defiance no doubt, and also cause some annoyance to the government, but they do not yet menace the very existence of the government. In spite of all our demonstrations and in spite of seventy thousand persons having gone to prison since January, 1932, the government can still claim :

- (1) That their army is quite loyal.
- (2) That their police forces are quite loyal.
- (3) That the civil administration (collection of revenue and taxes, administration of law courts and of prisons etc.) is still unimpaired.
- (4) That the life and property of Government officials and of their supporters are still quite safe. And the government can still boast that they do not care if the general population in India today are passively hostile."¹²

It was all the worse that this passivism was leading to a policy of compromise — periodical compromise as a part

of the Gandhian Satyagraha. Subhas Chandra was vehemently opposed to compromise as the greatest thorn in the flesh of India's freedom. "The question that will probably come up in your mind," he wrote, "is whether there is possibility of a compromise between the Congress and the British government. To that question my answer is that theoretically there is always a possibility of a compromise. From the practical point of view, compromise is almost impossible. When I say that a compromise between the Congress and the British government is theoretically possible, I mean that if the British government were really to go in for compromise, it is they who would gain and the Indian people who would lose. A compromise today can only be on one basis, a Government of the Indian people will have to be formed and that Government will have to co-operate with Britain and America in the war. On this basis the British may compromise . . . then it is they who gain and we who lose. In theory, therefore, a compromise is possible, and it will only be advantageous to the British.

Now from the practical point of view a compromise is almost impossible, because the British will not go on so far as to hand over the government to the Indian people . . . because Britain always thinks that if she were to hand over power and after that if Indians refuse to help them, then they will be in an awkward position. Therefore, a practical compromise is almost impossible."¹³ Subhas thus ruled out the question of compromise. According to him it will suck the life-blood of resistance. Independence, he held, admits of no compromise. ". . . The compromising *wallahas* will be guilty of two crimes," he warned, "firstly abandoning the objective of Independence and secondly giving up the method of non-co-operation and Satyagraha."¹⁴

Thus passivism and compromise were more, he felt, weakening rather than strengthening the civil-disobedience movement further crippled by its intermittent suspension by the Mahatma. Nay, whatever revolutionary fervour the Gandhi movement had, was smothered by the High Command's

policy of constitutionalism. The Delhi Pact of March, 1931 and the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement of May 1933, were to illustrate the position.

He criticised the Pact on the following grounds. There was not one word of commitment on the part of the British government on the major issue of Swaraj, the Congress having no reaction to it. There was a tacit acceptance of the proposal of federation with the Indian Princes.

There was no provision for the release of the following classes of prisoners : State prisoners and 'detenus' imprisoned without trial, the prisoners convicted of revolutionary offences, prisoners under trial for alleged revolutionary offences, the under-trial prisoners in the Meerut Conspiracy case, prisoners imprisoned in connection with labour strikes and other labour disputes, the Garhwali soldiers, prisoners sentenced in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement, the charges against whom referred to violence of some sort, and finally other classes of political prisoners not convicted for participation in the Civil Disobedience movement.

Thus the Delhi Pact was a painful testimony to the policy of compromise and nascent constitutionalism of the Gandhite Congress. Moreover, by refusing to espouse the cause of the aforesaid classes of political prisoners it "deprived the Indian National Congress of the claim to be the Central organ of the anti-imperialist struggle in India. By declining to be the spokesman of these militant anti-imperialist elements in India, the Indian National Congress stood out before the Indian Public as the spokesman and representative of the Satyagrahis (civil resisters) alone. "If the Delhi Pact . . . was a blunder, the surrender of May, 1933 is a calamity of the first magnitude. According to the principles of political strategy, at a time when the new constitution for India is under discussion the maximum pressure should have been brought to bear on the government by a strengthening of the civil-disobedience movement at this critical hour ; the work, the suffering and the sacrifice of the nation for the last thirteen years have been virtually undone . . . suspension of the civil-disobedience

campaign for one month means virtually a permanent suspension because mass movements cannot be created overnight. So the problem now before us is what we should do to make the most of a bad situation and what policy and plan we should adopt for the future."¹⁵

Thus these two factors—the blunder and the surrender—warranted, as Subhas Chandra saw it, a change in the Congress method of struggle. "... The latest action of Mahatma Gandhi," thus he issued a Manifesto jointly with Vithalbhai Patel from Vienna, "in suspending the civil-disobedience movement is a confession of failure as far as the present method of the Congress is concerned. . . . The time has therefore come for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method."¹⁶ To effect this reorganisation, two things, he felt, were necessary: to bring about a change in the composition of the Congress and to change its policy to a more radical character. "The plan of Subhas Chandra Bose," observes the 'New Age', "means a complete reorientation of the Congress policy and organisation."¹⁷

Subhas Chandra clearly saw it that the reconstruction of the Congress body was an indispensable requisite for the radicalisation of its policy and programme. "Bitter experience has taught us", he wrote, "that it is futile to expect the Congress to adopt a radical programme until we can first alter the composition of that body. . . . This will be possible only when the present Constitution of the Congress which is based on the British model is radically changed. One of our immediate tasks, therefore, is to organise branches of the party all over the country and to agitate for a radical change of the present Congress constitution. Only when this is done will the Congress adopt a radical programme and plan of action on the lines that we [Leftists] now contemplate."¹⁸ He also suggested two specific changes which should be incorporated within the organisation—Congress membership was to be enlarged to cover the vast majority of the countrymen, and the Congress organisation was to be disciplined and perfected.¹⁹

Its policy should also be completely revised. The cardi-

nal principle on which the movement of the last fourteen years had been based was Satyagraha or non-violent resistance, as Gandhi saw it. And accordingly "India's great hope was that the Satyagraha movement would fructify in a peaceful settlement in the following manner. Within India, the movement would gradually paralyse the civil administration of the country. Outside India, the lofty ethics of Satyagraha would stir the conscience of the British people. Thus would the conflict lead to a settlement, whereby India would win her freedom without striking a blow and without shedding any blood. But that hope was frustrated."²⁰

Hence the need of radicalisation of the Congress policy. Its method of passive resistance and compromise and its bias for federation should be discarded and replaced by a militant line of action against the British. It would, however, not mean, Subhas Chandra observed, abandonment of non-co-operation rather the form of non-co-operation would have to be changed into a more radical and militant one, on the basis of a radical programme of active resistance. The programme would be on the following line.

"We have to radicalise the Congress and so identify with the interests of the masses . . . as to make it a real mass organisation."²¹

For this he emphasized upon the need of unification of all the radical elements and oppressed sections in the country under the banner of the Congress, and to this end it was necessary to organize the students, youth, peasants, workers and women in the country. "Out of the ranks of the students arise political thinkers and politicians. If in India students do not take active part in politics," thus he said "from where are we to recruit our political workers?"²² The students' movement was, to him, a part of the national movement. Particularly, it could make an important contribution to Swadeshi. It was also a part of the wider youth movement.

A great responsibility, he thought, was reposed on the youth of the country—that of creating a new India. Future

India would be a product of the renaissance of the youth. "A youth association is characterized by a feeling of dissatisfaction with the present order of things, the desire for a better order accompanied by a vision of that order. Youth movements are not reformist in outlook but revolutionary . . . they have realised that it is for them to create a new India, free, great and powerful."²³

At the Nagpur Congress in 1929 he dwelt on the features of the youth movement. "Broadly speaking the youth movement has five aspects viz. political, social, economic, physical and cultural. The aim of the movement is a two-fold one—to break this five-fold bondage and as the result of this emancipation to give impetus to self-fulfilment and self-expressions. The movement is therefore both destructive and creative in character." He prescribed three indispensable requisites for this 'youth renaissance.' Thus in the Central Provinces Youth Conference on 29.11.29 he describes them as an improved system of education, a new literature and a strong moral standard. Regarding women's movement he pointed out that "it should be the primary objective of these organisations which will be run by women alone to carry on political propaganda among their own sex and to help the work of the Indian National Congress."²⁴ In an address at Dublin on 10.2.36 he prescribed three lines of activity for them—movement for giving Indian women literary, artistic and practical training through institutions like the Seva Sadan of Bombay, Indian Women's University of Poona, the Saroj Nalini Association of Calcutta ; movement for women's rights, conducted by the All-India Women's Conference and other organisations run on feminist lines ; the political movement which is clearly associated with the Indian National Congress.²⁵

He realised that for the radicalisation of the Congress, it was also necessary to draw the peasants and the workers into its fold. Thus when asked by R. Palme Dutta whether "he was in favour of broadening further the mass basis of the National Congress as an all-inclusive national front by collective

affiliation of labour and peasant organisations," he answered "yes, definitely."²⁶

He felt that "the future of Bengal lies in converting it [Congress] into the one organ of the Bengal peasantry,"²⁷ and in his presidential speech at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference he exclaimed, "Except when the Congressmen have joined the Kisan movement, how can we expect the masses to join the freedom movement?"

Subhas Chandra was also a champion of the Labour movement and Trade unionism. He believed that until the labour movement is able to gather strength, possibilities of repression will remain. Unless the huge power of Indian labour was organised it would not be possible to gain political or economic freedom. It was therefore necessary to establish unity among different Labour Organisations. Thus according to Subhas Chandra organised and disciplined labour should be harnessed to the coach of nationalism, and identified with the national movement.

He also encouraged the Trade Union Movement, as a part of the labour movement. "He would never prejudice the workers," writes Moni Ghosh, "for satisfying the whims of an individual."²⁸ But here his stand was something like a benevolent detachment. He was not himself a Trade Unionist, but would actually support the workers' movement. Thus he played a leading part in the settlement of the Tisco strike at Jamshedpur, 1928, in favour of the workers. His pro-labour attitude in this respect was clearly reflected in his letter to N. B. Saklavala, the Chairman of the Tisco, written on 15. 11. 35. "You have said," thus he wrote, "that the Company have not pressed the Association for the arrear of rent as well as for current rent on certain tacit understanding. In your opinion that understanding has now been violated by the Labour Association and the concessions should therefore be withdrawn. In my humble opinion such a procedure is altogether immoral and unworthy for a Company like yours . . . there is something unbecoming and even immoral in the latest move of the

management, extending its patronage to a new organisation, while refusing to recognise or co-operate with the oldest organisation in Jamshedpur and deny habitation on the plea of shortage of quarters—the last blow on the Association was to put an end to its existence.”

In the Naujawan Bharat Sabha Conference on 27.3.31, he raised three issues about trade unionism—the questions of foreign affiliation, representation at Geneva and mandatory character of the Trade Union Congress. He rejected the need of foreign affiliation and representation at Geneva, “with regard to the mandatory of the Trade Union Congress resolutions,” he said, “I am afraid there can hardly be any compromise, if the Trade Union Congress is to exist and function . . . if it is to work for the attainment of working class solidarity in the country . . . the resolutions of the Trade Union Congress are to be binding on all the unions affiliated to the Congress. To reduce the Trade Union Congress to the position and status of a loose federation or to something like an All-Party Conference would be suicidal.” Seen in this light, trade unionism, he felt, would be a powerful instrument of labour unification.

If the Congress can identify itself, he pointed out, with these elements, its character would be mass character, and its struggle a mass struggle, a struggle for “Swaraj for the masses, Swaraj for the workers and Swaraj for the peasants.”²⁹

Converted to this radical character the Congress should follow a radical programme of action, he suggested, which would include the following steps : establishment of a parallel government based on local congress committees, non-payment of taxes, general strikes, boycott of British goods, boycott of all legislatures, government committees, local bodies or law courts.

After 1933, against the backdrop of the changed circumstances as noted above, Subhas Chandra was convinced that this programme would not suffice. The Congress programme should be not only radical but also revolutionary—

physical force was to be used when necessary. This, however, would not mean rejection of non-violence and acceptance of violence as a principle. Non-violence would still be the guiding principle of the Congress but it was not to be as rigid and absolute as before, and was to be an elastic process to tolerate the use of force as a matter of expediency when and if necessary. That this revolutionary radicalism of Subhas Chandra was not really opposed to non-violence was borne out by his 'Independence Day' address delivered at Shraddhananda Park on 27.1.38, where he expressed his determination "to go on with the struggle non-violently taught them by Mahatma Gandhi."³⁰ To account for his faith in non-violence even at this stage, we should refer to three factors: He fundamentally believed in non-violence. It was still a period of his experimentation with non-violence. And it was also for the sake of unity of the Congress which was pledged to non-violence. "... A nationalist movement can succeed," he says, "in paralysing a foreign government only when either or all of the following steps are taken:

- (1) Prevention of tax and revenue collection.
- (2) Adoption of measures whereby help from other quarters—whether financial or military—may not reach the government in times of distress.
- (3) Winning over the sympathy and support of the present supporters of the British government in India—that is of the Army, the Police and the Civil Servants—so that orders given by the government for crushing the movement will not be carried out.

(4) Actual attempt to seize power by force of arms. The last step is to be ruled out, because the Congress is pledged to non-violence. But it is nevertheless possible to paralyse the present administration and compel it to submit to our demands if we can adopt the following measures:

- (1) Prevent collection of tax and revenue.
- (2) Through labour and peasant organisations prevent all kinds of help from reaching the government when they are in difficulty.

(3) Win the sympathy and support of the Government's own supporters by means of our superior propaganda.

If these three measures are adopted, the governmental machinery can be thrown out of gear. In the first place they will have no money to meet the cost of administration. In the second place the orders they may issue will not be carried out by their own officers. And lastly, help sent to the government from other quarters will not reach them. There is no royal road to success in winning political freedom. The above three measures have to be adopted in part or in whole if victory is to be achieved. The Congress has failed simply because it has not succeeded in giving effect satisfactorily to any of the above three measures."³¹

This was Subhas Chandra's revolutionary radicalism. "It expounds in some details the new militant policy for which Subhas Bose and V. J. Patel appealed in their recent pronouncement from Vienna."³² There was the need, he felt, for a countrywide propaganda, and the creation of a new literature for explaining and propagating this new cult and programme. And he urged upon the Congress to resume the struggle on the basis of such a radical and militant line of action, to paralyse the British administration, sever the British connection and thereby force the British to accede to their national demand of Swaraj.

This was Subhas Chandra's concept of a non-violent revolution against the British. His line of action was fundamentally based on civil-disobedience but civil-disobedience in the widest sense of the term—as a method of active resistance, as a revolutionary movement, as a fiery ordeal. If it could be launched by the Congress, it would be for him the best course. Failing that a new party would have to be formed within the Congress, composed of all radical elements to carry out this task. It was from this radical point of view that he appeared as a Leftist to the Congress.

The image of such a new party to be prepared to give an alternative leadership to that of the Congress, we find in the Samyavadi Sangha, 'Mr. Bose's New Deal',³³—a party

envisaged by him to be an indispensable necessity for India, for her emancipation and post-freedom reconstruction. It would stand for complete Independence, and an uncompromising struggle to attain it. Its was to be the responsibility to implement the radical-revolutionary programme stated above, in the case of failure of the Congress,—“... to launch another fight on a bigger and more intensive scale our requirement will be a party of determined men and women who will have to play the role of the fighters and leaders in the national campaign against Great Britain”³⁴

Standing at the vanguard of the national struggle, as it was to be, its character would be radical, representative and national. “It will be a centralised and well-disciplined All-India party—working amongst every section of the community. This party will have its representatives working in the Indian National Congress, in the All India Trade Union Congress, in the peasants’ organisations, in the women’s organisations, in the youth organisations, in the student organisations, in the depressed classes’ organisations, and if necessary, in the interests of the great cause, in the sectarian or communal organisations as well. The different branches of the party working in different spheres and in different places must be under the control and guidance of the Central Committee of the party.

This party will work in co-operation with any other party that may be working towards the same end, in whole or in part. It will not bear enmity towards any individual or party ; but at the same time it will look upon itself as specially called upon to play the role in history that has been described above.”³⁵

The above plan of the Samyavadi Sangha provided an illustration of his concept of revolutionary radicalism.

The year 1933, thus we find, was an important landmark in the evolution of Leftism in his political thought from radicalism to revolutionary radicalism.

9.2.54
S.C.E.R.T., West Bengal

Date 13-3-87

Acc. No. 3924



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CAPTER III

Forward Bloc 1939-41

The Forward Bloc was a child of this process of transformation. The establishment of the Forward Bloc in May, 1939, by Subhas Chandra was another important milestone in the evolution of his Leftism or radicalism. And it came as the practical version of his theory of the Samyavadi Sangha discussed above, inasmuch as it was conceived and its movement conducted largely on the line of his plan of Samyavadi Sangha. "The immediate objective of the Forward Bloc was an uncompromising struggle with British Imperialism for winning India's freedom."¹ It stood for "Swaraj as our birthright . . . complete Independence, not a whit less than that."²

The method of the Bloc to this end was a two-fold one—national and international. It stood for a relentless and uncompromising national struggle against the British—a revolutionary struggle of essentially a non-violent character—by employing all possible means to this end, and thereby force the British to transfer power to the Indian people. "It is for the Indian people to make an immediate demand for the transference of power."³

The Bloc also stood for an intelligent utilisation of the international situation—exploitation of the international crisis of Britain to the advantage of India, to hasten her march towards freedom and thus submit India's 'National Demand' of Swaraj in the form of an ultimatum to the British. "How can we save our country from this political rut, utilise the international crisis to India's advantage and win freedom for ourselves—this is the supreme problem of the hour."⁴ Nay, if it was necessary, the Bloc was even prepared to join hands with the Axis Powers—the enemies of Britain fighting her in the war against Britain. ". . . the Indian people should not

be hampered by any philosophical notions like Gandhian non-violence or any sentimentalism like Nehru's anti-Axis foreign policy. The Bloc stands for a realistic foreign policy."⁵ In fact, with this end in view, the Forward Bloc had made a contact, as Milan Hauner points out, with Rashbihari Bose and the I. N. A. in Japan, although it did not yield any fruit.⁶

Thus although the method of the Bloc was fundamentally non-violent, its non-violent principle was not a rigid obsession like that of Mahatma Gandhi. If necessary, it was even prepared to resort to an armed revolution or a revolutionary war. Freedom, it believed, is not given, but taken, and it could be taken by its readiness to adopt any method that may be expedient for achieving its objective. "The Bloc stands for something positive and dynamic. There can be no going back for us—nor any marking time. The Forward Bloc has to move forward without a break, without a pause."⁷

The foundation of the Forward Bloc would not have been necessary, Subhas Chandra points out, had the Congress followed this method. But the latter, bereft of all dynamism and biased for compromise, had neither the intention nor the ability of doing so. What could be expected of them was Satyagraha of the Gandhian model, and hence nothing but a compromise. "Gandhism envisages an ultimate compromise with Imperialism for Gandhian Satyagraha (or Civil Disobedience) must end in a compromise."⁸

In 1939 the Gandhite Congress was not prepared even for this much exertion. The rosy path of their constitutionalism had completely sapped their spirit of resistance, superseding the original revolutionary spirit of Gandhism. That is why "the Right wing had definitely told us that they would not work in co-operation with the Leftists in future . . . and that a national struggle in near future was out of the question."⁹ Rather they would avoid a struggle which, they held, would pose a threat to their power, and they would impeach the Leftists, who, they feared to be the pioneers of such a struggle. And it was all to preserve their peaceful

parliamentary life.

Subhas Chandra strongly criticised this policy of constitutionalism. "Congress ministries in the provinces were formed in 1937 and neo-constitutionalism reared its head in a menacing form within the Congress in 1938. Ever since then the main task of Leftism has been to fight this 'Frankenstein' created by the Congress itself. How to stem this drift towards constitutionalism, how to create afresh a revolutionary mentality among the people in place of neo-constitutionalist mentality . . . how to bring the Congress back to the path of uncompromising national struggle . . . these have been the main problems for the Leftists since 1938."¹⁰ And it was to give shape to these plans that the Forward Bloc was born. For "according to the Forward Bloc . . . a fighting mentality is necessary instead of a constitutionalist mentality."¹¹

The bias of these pseudo-constitutionalists for Federation was condemned by Subhas Chandra with equal force and the Forward Bloc "stood [for an] unrelenting opposition to the federal scheme,"¹² insisting upon the Congress to give an uncompromising opposition to the plan of Federation.

Thus at a time when an uncompromising national struggle, according to Subhas Chandra, was the only path to freedom, all roads of the Congress led to compromise. The only way out, he saw, to counteract this tendency was Left-consolidation—organisation of "all progressive, radical and anti-imperialist elements . . . on the basis of a common minimum programme."¹³

Not that the formation of the Forward Bloc was a must to him from the very beginning to bring about this Left-consolidation. Had it been possible under the auspices of the existing Leftist parties, he would have surrendered to it.

Not that there was no such attempt. The first experiment towards such Left-consolidation was made by the National Front and the Congress Socialist Party. But they failed to rally all anti-imperial and radical forces under the name of a Left Bloc, and ultimately gave it up.

They failed because they were too keen, as Subhas Chandra saw it, on propagating socialism—a thing of the future, whereas the immediate task was the widening and strengthening of the anti-imperialist front and an intensification of the anti-imperialist struggle. Moreover, according to Subhas Chandra another factor of their failure was that, they were more pseudo-Leftists than Leftists because of their constant vacillation, some of them even joining the Rightist Camp. The failure convinced him that it was imperative to start an organisation with all seriousness and sincerity, to effect Left-consolidation. Hence the Forward Bloc.

Thus the Forward Bloc was a historical necessity as Subhas Chandra notes it. "All those who believe in progress and desire it, should therefore actively assist in this task of Left-consolidation, and should be prepared for the conflict resulting therefrom. For bringing about this Left-consolidation the Forward Bloc was born . . ." ¹⁴ And it was formed with the help of those Congressmen who viewed with dismay the growth of right-consolidation and consequent drift towards constitutionalism, and were more interested in widening and strengthening the anti-imperialist front than anything else. According to Subhas Chandra there should be three steps for Left-consolidation: (i) the pseudo-Leftists should be separated from the genuine Leftists to be followed by the fusion of the purged Leftists and (ii) then they were to go through the acid test of fighting on double front: against the British and the Rightist Congressites both of whom deemed the Bloc to be a thorn in the flesh of their ambition,—anti-British and anti-Rightist in character, (iii) on their successfully coming out of the test, the process of Left-consolidation would be complete.

"Left consolidation could have been achieved," writes Subhas Chandra, "in either of the following ways:

- (i) By forming one party and rallying all the Leftist elements therein. This, however, was not possible because several parties claiming to be Leftists, already existed and they were not prepared to liquidate themselves in favour of one Party.
- (ii) By organizing a new Bloc which all Leftists and existing

Leftist parties would join, while retaining their separate identity, if they so desired.

This was the first aim and endeavour of the Forward Bloc when it was formed. It did not want to start rivalry with the existing Leftist parties, nor did it want to undermine any of them. If the Bloc's proposal had been accepted and all Leftist parties had joined the Forward Bloc while retaining their separate identity—Left-consolidation would have been easily and promptly achieved and the Rightists would have been faced with a formidable force. But unfortunately for the Leftist cause, this also was not possible, because some of the existing Leftist parties prohibited their members from joining the newly formed Forward Bloc.

(iii) In the above circumstances, a fresh attempt at Left-consolidation was made in the following manner. The existing Leftist parties and the Forward Bloc agreed among themselves to form a new Committee to be called the Left-consolidation Committee. This Committee was to function as the organ of the entire Left—but it would act only when there was unanimity among the component elements of the Left-consolidation Committee."¹⁵

Thus the Left-consolidation envisaged by the Forward Bloc had two connotations.

It was to be a united front of the radical and anti-imperialist forces, against the British. On the other hand, it was to be a counterpoise to Right-consolidation within the Congress. The efforts of the Gandhites to consolidate themselves is nothing else than 'Right-consolidation' within the Congress When the danger was detected the Leftists began to organise in self-defence"¹⁶

Nay, the Forward Bloc stood for complete Independence, Gandhism for Dominion Status. The Bloc stood for uncompromising national struggle, and "cannot accept a compromise with British Imperialism,"¹⁷ while Gandhism stood for compromise. The latter espoused the cause of Federation and constitutionalism, while the former was deadly opposed to them. The Gandhian hierarchy's war-policy was uncondi-

tional co-operation with Britain in the war, without anyway embarrassing her at this critical moment, while the Bloc's policy was one of non-co-operation and exploitation of the international crisis of Britain to hasten India's freedom. "Since 1938, the issues on which we Leftists have found ourselves at loggerheads with the Congress and on which no compromise was possible—are the resumption of the national struggle for Independence and the correct war policy of the Indian people."¹⁸

Thus the Forward Bloc was an antithesis to Gandhism. This explains the bitterness between Subhas Chandra and the Gandhite Congress, the Congress attack on the Forward Bloc and the expulsion of Subhas Chandra from the Congress.

"In most places I visited," he wrote, "I had no co-operation or assistance from the Congress organisation . . . in some places the attitude of the Official Congress was one of neutrality or indifference, but in others there was hostility open or covert."¹⁹

"Though warned over and over again," he throws light on the policy of vengeance of the Gandhian hierarchy against the Leftists ". . . these leaders of ours did not move their little finger to prepare for the impending developments. Instead, they ridiculed us. At Tripuri Congress they were anxious to wreck vengeance on us and to rehabilitate their lost prestige, than to look after the nation's interests . . ."²⁰ It is in the light of this vindictive policy that the Congress expelled Subhas Chandra from the organisation as some sort of a punitive measure for his independent mind and line of action. "By trying to warn the country," he voices forth his angry protest, "about the continued drift towards constitutionalism and reformism, by protesting against the resolutions which seek to kill the revolutionary spirit of the Congress and by appealing to the country to prepare for the coming struggle, I have committed a crime for which I have to pay the penalty."²¹

This was a reflex on the authoritarian character of the Gandhite constitutionalism. The Forward Bloc was strongly

opposed to it and it stood for fighting democracy within the Congress. Its was the demand for a composite Cabinet instead of a homogeneous cabinet as planned by the Mahatma. "The Leftists have always stood for the principle of a composite Cabinet."²² It was also a champion of freedom of speech and freedom of action for the Congress members. Thus Subhas Chandra strongly protested against the unwarranted intervention of the Congress Working Committee in the matter of his appointing the members of the Committee for the coming year, in his capacity as the Congress President. "Under the Constitution of the Congress," thus he wrote, "the President was entitled to appoint the Executive for the coming year, but it was clear that the Gandhi wing would continue to obstruct, if the Executive was not appointed according to its choice."²³

Thus the Forward Bloc "stood for democratisation, radicalisation and reorientation of the Congress" as H. V. Kamath points out, "into a people's will to freedom."²⁴

In a statement issued by Subhas Chandra in his paper 'Forward Bloc', on 26. 7. 39, declared his strong resolve to fight democracy not only within the Congress, but also outside it.²⁵ And he sharply criticised the British imperialists for their anti-democratic crusade against the cause of India's liberty and freedom "The Churchill Amery and Company," he wrote, "had dropped their hypocritical mask as champions of liberty and democracy. The horrible face of a soulless alien despotism had revealed itself to the Indian people in all its nakedness."²⁶

"The immediate duty of the Indians is therefore," he issued a statement from Kurseong on 8. 6. 40, "is to stand up for the slogan 'All power to the people' and make an immediate demand for a provisional national government vested with full sovereign powers."

Thus the Forward Bloc had to fight on a double front : the British front and the Right front, and it was in this light that it was a symbol of Leftism in the sense of anti-imperialism and anti-Rightism.

Its concept of Leftism was also related to Socialism. It

stood for socialism—for a socialistic reconstruction of India in the post-freedom period, on the ruins of British imperialism “when Imperialism is ended the Socialist phase of our movement will commence.”²⁷

But its idea of Socialism did not conform to any conventional standard. “It does not swear by copy-book maxims or text books of politics or economics. It is anxious to assimilate all the knowledge that the outside world can give and profit by the experience of other progressive nations. It regards progress or evolution as an eternal process to which India has a contribution to make.”²⁸

Thus socialism as conceived by the Forward Bloc was a rational, academic and sociological concept. It “will build up a new India . . . on the basis of the eternal principles of Liberty, Democracy and socialism.”²⁹ But in doing so it would serve the cause of not only India but also of humanity and human progress. But unless freedom was won, this ideal of a socialist state in India could not be realised. Hence, British Imperialism and Gandhism, the Forward Bloc held, were formidable obstacles in the way of this new order of socialism in India—impediments in the path not only of her freedom but also of her post-freedom reconstruction. In conclusion, we have to examine several allegations that are levelled against the Forward Bloc.

It is argued sometimes that the Forward Bloc was some sort of a rebellion against the High Command, “an instrument of personal vendetta against the Congress.”³⁰ It was the product of a rebel mentality of Subhas Chandra, and its motif force was to develop and fructify this rebellious urge. But this thesis is to be repudiated on the following grounds.

The Forward Bloc was founded by Subhas Chandra to consolidate and unify the progressive, radical and anti-imperialist elements under one banner. Had it been possible, he confessed, under the Congress, it would have been the best course, and the creation of the Bloc would not have been then necessary. “. . . if it had been possible,” he wished, “for all anti-imperialist forces to work together in spite of our

differences.”³¹ But it could not be possible. “The best thing for India,” he wrote, “would have been for the entire Congress led by the Gandhi Wing to take up the policy advocated by the Forward Bloc.”³² But that was not to be the case. “. . . Since September, 1938, Mahatma Gandhi had consistently urged that a national struggle was out of the question in the near future, while others, like the writer, who were not less patriotic than him, were equally convinced that the country was internally more ripe for a revolution than ever before and that the coming international crisis would give India an opportunity for achieving her independence, which is rare in human history. When all other attempts to influence Gandhi failed, the only way left was to organise the Forward Bloc and proceed to win over the mass of the people and thereby put indirect pressure on the Mahatma. . . . The writer still remembers clearly the . . . discussion which he had with Nehru in April, 1939, when he announced his desire to resign the presidentship of the Congress and organise a new party. Nehru argued that such a step would create a split within the Congress and would thereby weaken the national organisation at a critical moment. The writer, urged on the contrary, that one should distinguish between the unity which led to more effective action and the unity which resulted in inaction. Unity could be preserved superficially in the Congress only by surrendering to the Gandhi wing—but since the Gandhi wing was opposed to the idea of a national struggle, such unity if maintained, would serve to stultify all dynamic activity on the part of the Congress in future. If, on the contrary, a party with a dynamic programme was organised within the Congress now, that party might one day move the Gandhi wing and the entire Congress to militant action. Moreover, more critical times were ahead and a war was bound to break out in the near future. If one wanted to act in such an international crisis, then there should be a party ready to seize that opportunity. If the Gandhi wing was unwilling to play that role, another party should be formed at once—when there was still time to organise such

party. If that task was neglected or postponed, it could not be done later, when the international crisis actually overtook India. And without a well-organised party ready to utilise the coming international crisis for winning freedom, India would once again repeat her mistake of 1914 It was in September 1938, that the writer for the first time realised that in the event of an international crisis, Gandhi would not seize the opportunity for attacking the British Government. It was then that he also realised for the first time that Gandhi regarded a struggle with Britain in the near future as outside the domain of possibility."⁸³ Hence the Forward Bloc to prosecute this war against imperialism. But the Bloc was not to be an alternative organisation to the Congress independent of it, but it was to be an organisation within the Congress, as it was resolved in the Forward Bloc Constitution drawn up on 22.6.39.

Moreover, the fight was to be waged in the name of the Congress. "The time has come for the Left-wing to differentiate itself from the right and proceed to consolidate itself—when this is done the Left Wing will secure a majority within the Congress and then proceed to resume the struggle for independence in the name of the Indian National Congress. This is the task of the Left-wing today. To fulfil this task the Forward Bloc has come into existence."⁸⁴

Seen in this light the Forward Bloc, even its Left-consolidation programme, did not appear to be a challenge to the Congress, rather it was to mean an extension of the Congress line to a new radical zone.

Not only that. If the Gandhian hierarchy would adopt a radical and dynamic policy, the Bloc would immediately join it, sinking their difference. "Let the Supreme Executive of the Congress," he wrote, "call upon the nation to resume the struggle. We shall then fall in line with them in that great and noble task. Unity within the Congress could be achieved on the basis of a dynamic programme of national struggle."⁸⁵ If this could be done, there would be even no Right-Left

confrontation, he assured. "... We Leftists would be justified in surrendering to them on the plea of unity, only if the right wing still had a dynamic role to play."²⁶

Thus the stand of the Forward Bloc was one of national interest, national unity, and national freedom. That the Congress was opposed to its stand, it was critical of it, and fought to convert it to its own way of thinking—a criticism and a fight constructive and not destructive. From this perspective, Forward Bloc's leftism could not be branded as a 'rebellion,' rather it was synonymous with radicalism or nationalism, an idea of leftism not in the conventional sense of the term.

The Bloc's leftism was described as a pseudo-leftism by P. C. Joshi of C.P.I. "Bose wanted to give a call for national struggle for Swaraj and was against a call for Satyagraha either through the Forward Bloc or the Left was it leftism? Was it just nothing but left slogans to escape struggle? The Forward Bloc movement is an infiltration of bourgeois influence over the masses Left nationalism of the Forward Bloc began as an independent political force—but it changed in five minutes—it is neither genuine leftism nor good nationalism, not a progressive but a regressive force—anti-struggle, anti-unity—its aim remains a settlement with imperialism for a national struggle Bose wants another Congress He does not struggle against compromise he is only wanting to take advantage of it alternative bourgeois reformist line masquerading as left. This is the base of the Forward Bloc."²⁷

But all this is quite absurd.

The Forward Bloc, as we have seen above, stood for an uncompromising national struggle against the British. Hence to call it anti-struggle prone to a settlement with British imperialism—bourgeois, pro-imperialist in character, is *prima facie* wrong. That he was convinced of the insufficiency of Satyagraha, he did not give a call for it. But it did not mean that it was just a pseudo-leftism, uttering merely left-slogans, and desiring to avoid a struggle, as Joshi thinks it. The

Forward Bloc rather exhorted the people to a more powerful form of struggle : uncompromising struggle. It was strongly opposed to compromise and determined to fight against it. Joshi's charge against it that it did not fight compromise does not thus hold water. "There was nothing in the background of the Indian national struggle," observes Goel, "which could explain this communist zig-zagging regarding Subhas Chandra Bose. Right from 1930-41 Bose [stood for] a no-compromise all out struggle to oust the British" ³⁸

It is equally wrong to argue that the Bloc was a symbol of anti-unity, pseudo-nationalism, and 'another Congress.' The foundation of the Bloc was national unity, it being a wing—the Left wing—within the Congress and not a rival or parallel organisation, as we have noted above.

Joshi's allegation of opportunism against it deemed by him, to be keen on taking advantage of the Congress policy of compromise, is fictitious. "The line adopted by the Forward Bloc is based on a definite programme and within it there is no room for wobblers. The members of the Forward Bloc have to face the wrath not only of the British imperialists, but of our Congress bureaucracy as well and they also run the risk of being expelled from the Congress. How such men can be called opportunists, passes my comprehension." ³⁹

That the Bloc stood for a revolutionary socialism, as we have noted above, opposed to reformism, Joshi's charge of reformism against it, is also absolutely unfounded—" . . . the Forward Bloc desires to work . . . not with a reformist or moderate mentality but with a revolutionary mentality." ⁴⁰

Thus all the charges of Joshi against the Forward bloc should be rejected as biased and fictitious. The Forward Bloc's concept of leftism could not be, and was not a pseudo-leftism.

NOTES

1. *Op. cit.* p. 337.
2. 'Delhi and after.' Forward Bloc editorial, 13.7.40.
3. All India Forward Bloc Conference, Nagpur, 18.6.40. Presidential Speech.

4. Forward Bloc editorial, 11.5.40.
5. *Op. cit.*, p. 337.
6. Indian independence and the Axis Powers: Subhas Chandra Bose in Europe during the strategic initiative of the Axis Powers, 1939-42,—Paper read by Milan Hauner in International Netaji Seminar, 1973, Calcutta.
7. Forward Bloc editorial, 10.2.40.
8. *Op. cit.*, p. 412.
9. All India Forward Bloc Conference, Nagpur, 18.6.40.
10. *Op. cit.*, p. 401.
11. 'Looking Back'. Forward Bloc editorial, 4.11.39.
12. Forward Bloc editorial, 4.2.39.
13. 'The Role of Forward Bloc.' Forward Bloc editorial, 12.8.39.
14. *Op. cit.*, p. 403
15. *Op. cit.*, pp. 403—4.
16. *Op. cit.*, pp. 402—3.
17. 'Forward Bloc editorial', 10.2.40.
18. *Op. cit.*, p. 400.
19. 'Glimpses of my tour.', *Crossroads* : the works of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, 1938-40, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, p. 197.
20. Forward Bloc editorial, 30.12.39.
21. 'Statement on Disciplinary Action', 19.8.39
22. 'Forward Bloc editorial', 26.8.39.
23. *Op. cit.*, p. 332.
24. Netaji oration, 1963, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta.
25. Hindusthan Standard, 27. 7. 39.
26. *Op. cit.*, pp. 352-53.
27. Forward Bloc editorial, 23. 12. 40
28. *Op. cit.*, p. 414
29. Presidential speech, All India Forward Bloc Conference, Nagpur, 18.6.40.
30. Editorial, The Statesman, 12.8.39.
31. 'Forward Bloc editorial', 26.10.40.
32. *Op. cit.*, p. 334.
33. *Op. cit.*, pp. 335-36.
34. 'Why Forward Bloc?'. Forward Bloc editorial, 5.8.39
35. 'An appeal to national unity.' Forward Bloc editorial, 11.5.70.
36. Forward Bloc editorial, 5.8.39.
37. 'The New Age' Communist monthly, March, 1940.
38. Sitaram Goel, *Netaji and C. P. I.*, Society for defence of freedom in Asia, Calcutta, 1955, p. 15.
39. Subhs Chandra's statement to the Associated Press, 26.7.39, Hindusthan Standard; 27.7.39.
40. Bose's address at a public meeting at Howrah, 8.5.39.

CHAPTER IV

Abroad (1941-45)

The Forward Bloc movement marked the final phase of Subhas Chandra's struggle against the British in India, and it formed a prelude to his I. N. A. movement. The Bloc was prepared, we have noted above, to join the Axis against England, if necessary. This necessity was urgently felt by Subhas Chandra when he found that the scope of its operation had become extremely limited due to the 'double-front'¹ attack on it and there was no other alternative than to wage a revolutionary war from abroad against Britain to liberate his country. He was moreover convinced that the British would not yield to India's demands, without a stiff struggle. "India is the jewel of the British Empire and in order to keep their jewel, the British will fight, to the last. The Indian people therefore should banish all hopes that Britain will accede to India's demands and should carry on their struggle till the British are expelled from India."²

In such circumstances, when there was no hope of 'transference of power', and the only hope lay in the expulsion of the British, the method of struggle should no more be a non-violent civil-disobedience movement, however massive it might be. An armed revolution was the only way out. Its urgency was all the more pronounced because of the reduced strength of the Forward Bloc's uncompromising national struggle due to the anti-Bloc and compromising tactics of the Gandhian hierarchy.

Thus he thought "that by the weapon of Civil Disobedience alone we will not achieve freedom."³ Its force was strictly limited against the Indian situation. "By means of Civil Disobedience and Satyagraha," he said, "we could surely harass the enemy, but these weapons were insufficient to drive out the enemy from India."⁴

Thus as Uttam Chand saw it, "Subhas Babu's conviction was that the British would not quit India until and unless they were thrown out by a bloody revolution."⁵

This was the only way left, the last resort for India to meet the challenge of the mighty British, who appreciated nothing else than force. "For a freedom-loving Indian . . . the first alternative is prayer and petition, relying on the belief that the British will grant us freedom as gift, at the end of the war," Subhas Chandra said, "I rule out this possibility . . . the second alternative is the policy of 'wait and see' . . . This alternative too I want to rule out . . . the third alternative is the path of Satyagraha or civil-disobedience . . . Now Satyagraha cannot bring about the physical overthrow of the British rule or the physical expulsion of the British from India. Satyagraha can only bring independence in a peaceful way, through an honourable understanding with the British. But this has been rendered impossible because of the British resolve to crush the Satyagraha movement . . . thus we are driven to the fourth and last alternative—namely the use of arms for winning freedom . . . Independence of India can never be achieved through a non-violent struggle."⁶

Thus his theory of armed revolution was the last phase in the evolution of his revolutionary radicalism — a logical culmination of a process of evolution from passive resistance through active resistance to armed resistance. The younger generation in India has, however, learnt from the last twenty years' experience that while passive resistance can hold up or paralyse a foreign administration," he wrote, "it cannot overthrow or expel it, without the use of physical force. Impelled by the experience the people today are spontaneously passing on from passive to active resistance . . . and using force in many ways in order to overthrow the British yoke. The last stage will come when active resistance will develop into an armed revolution. Then will come the end of the British rule in India."⁷

Hence the need, he felt, of a revolutionary movement from abroad. The character of this 'armed revolution', he saw,

would be twofold. It would be a corrective and complement to the non-violent Satyagraha movement in India, rather than a denial of it, to run simultaneously with the latter as two-fronts of the same movement—the external front and the domestic front—to bring about India's emancipation. On the other hand it was to be a means to the end of fomenting a revolution within India. And "the revolution that will break out within the country will ultimately bring about the end of the British rule in India".⁸ It is against this background, that we are to examine his plan of revolution in Germany and his I.N.A. revolution.

His plan in Germany was based on three factors. His fundamental objective was to promote a revolution in India, for which he made an intensive radio propaganda in the name of the Free India Radio Station, exhorting the people to hold fast and fight. And he chalked out two lines for this propaganda. On the one hand the broadcasts would provide a moral incentive to the people of India by alleviating their apprehension of the invincibility of the British Power. As Quaroni observes: "according to Bose, India is morally ripe for revolution, what is lacking is the courage to take the first step Bose is of opinion that the main obstacle to the possibilities of a revolution in India is the great fear of England and more than the fear the belief that England with her strength and her luck will eventually overcome even this crisis the basic problem is therefore, according to Bose, to convince the Indians with facts and with propaganda that England can be beaten and shall be beaten"⁹

On the other hand, in his broadcasts he provided a plan of revolution in India. Thus in a broadcast from Radio Berlin, on 31.8.42 he suggested revolutionary programme for the general public and for the Congress.

For the former he recommended the following steps :

- (1) Boycott of British goods.
- (2) Boycott of Britishers and pro-Britishers.
- (3) Holding of public meetings and demonstrations in spite of prohibition.

- (4) Secret bulletins and secret radio stations.
- (5) March to government office houses and demand their departure from India.
- (6) Organise processions to occupy government offices to hamper administration.
- (7) Police and prison officials oppressing the people to be punished.
- (8) Street barricades against police attack.
- (9) Burn down government offices and factories working for war ends.
- (10) Interrupt postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications.
- (11) Interrupt rail, tram and bus service.
- (12) Destroy police stations, railway stations and jails in isolated places.

For the Congress he suggested the following :

- (1) Non-payment of taxes to obstruct revenue.
- (2) Stay-in-strike or go-slow among workers to impede production.
- (3) Secret guerilla bands by students to destroy British relics viz., monuments etc.
- (4) Underground work by women specially girls.
- (5) Government officers, instead of resigning should sabotage by eliciting secret information or by inefficient working.
- (6) Servants should create troubles for their masters by demanding higher salary and better condition, etc.
- (7) Application of Col. Britton tactics in European service by listening to the B.B.C.

Subhas Chandra's plan was to foment a revolutionary movement within India on the basis of Civil Disobedience in the widest scale possible, and, by way of supplementing it, to raise a Free India Army in Europe out of the Indian POWs, to launch an offensive war against Britain, in collaboration with the Axis Powers. And this army would form the basis of India's future national army.

Sandwiched between this two-front fight, he believed,

the British would be forced to quit India. More, he held that Britain's defeat in the war of which he was sure, would seriously handicap her position in India, and if at this critical moment she was caught in the fire of a revolution within the country, her house of imperialism in India would collapse.

This he tried to impress upon his countrymen through his radio campaign, which had thus a vital role in his plan of the Indian Revolution. "Big events will happen soon in the sphere of international politics which will help the overthrow of British Imperialism. Time is therefore ripe for widespread propaganda against Britain throughout the world and particularly in the oriental countries."¹⁰

As the basis of his plan of propaganda and Free India Army, Subhas Chandra established a Free Indian Government in Germany with its branches and legations set up in friendly countries wherever possible viz., Paris, Rome, Brussels, Vienna and Prague. This lent a European character to his F.I.A. plan in Germany. The policy of the government was also to create a centre of co-ordination with the organisations of Overseas Indians in South-east Asia. Further, a treaty should be entered into between the Axis Powers and the Free India Government providing, *inter alia*, for India's independence in the event of an Axis victory, special facilities for the Axis Powers in India when an independent government is set up there. "As a basis for the propaganda", observes Toye, "and as a guarantee for the future, he asked for an Axis declaration on Indian independence".¹¹

This would, Subhas Chandra believed, convince the Indian people that their independence had been guaranteed by the Axis Powers in the event of an Axis victory, and that the status of independence was being recognised already in actual practice. This would give a *locus standi* to his struggle from abroad, a struggle in the name of a Free India State. The Axis recognition of Indian independence would be a means to this end.

The anti-Axis sentimentalism of the Indians, he tried to impress upon them, should be immediately discarded in this

light. "There is nothing to hope for from England, in this moment of extreme danger for she still denies us an assurance for the status of 'Dominion', while the Axis Powers guarantee us complete freedom and independence."¹² The final aspect of his plan of revolution was that it would entail work not only in Europe, but also in Afghanistan, in the independent tribal territory lying between Afghanistan and India and in India. While in Afghanistan, a centre would be established to maintain communications between Europe and Afghanistan, the Independent Tribal territory between Afghanistan and India would be a radio propaganda centre, military intelligence centre and a centre of attack on British military establishments. In India the work would be voluminous to be carried out by the agents. It would consist of :

- "(a) Intensive propaganda calling upon the Indian people not to give one soldier or one rupee to the British Government.
- (b) Propaganda calling upon the civilian population to defy the civil authorities by refusing to pay taxes, refusing to obey the orders and the laws of the British Government etc.
- (c) Secret work among the Indian section of the Army in order to induce them to rise in revolt.
- (d) Organising strikes in factories which work for helping Great Britain in her war efforts.
- (e) Carrying out sabotage of strategic railway bridges, factories etc.
- (f) Organising revolt among the civil population in the different parts of the country as a stepping stone to a general mass revolution."¹³

Thus the plan of the Indian Revolution as envisaged by Subhas Chandra in Germany, expounds in detail his theory of armed resistance. It was given a more mature and comprehensive form by him in his I.N.A. experiment—the last stage in the evolution of his concept of 'Leftism'—which I leave for discussion in the next chapter. This was his concept of revolution. But we should bear it in our mind that 'revolution' was not his

creed or craze, it was a matter of expediency for him. His goal was peace, his faith was in peace, but peaceful means being found by him as useless in the Indian context, he was forced to resort to revolution—but to attain peace and freedom. As Kitty Kurty notes it, "I felt that he believed more in evolution than in revolution, more in orderly ways of nature than in force and violence, even if at a given moment for practical reasons he might use radical methods . . .".¹⁴

It would be a great mistake and injustice to lend any colour of terrorism, or extremism in the sense of terrorism, to Subhas Chandra's concept of revolutionary radicalism, as for instance, had been done by Hugh Toye when we find him commenting that Subhas Chandra was even prepared to resort to terrorism to prevent any negotiated settlement between the government and the Congress.

The same attitude was reflected on the part of the Government of India in its reports on and reviews of 'The Indian struggle', written by Subhas Chandra.

Thus in response to Pandit Nilkanta Das' question in the Legislative Assembly, as to what led the government to proscribe the book, there was the official reply that "the book tended generally to encourage methods of terrorism . . .".¹⁵

Again Mr. Cleary's review of the book held that "the writer has not sung a song in praise of terrorism but has . . . taken great pains to explain that all the principal acts of terrorism committed during the last few years have been the result of diabolical action on the part of the government officials . . . far more is written in this book likely to encourage terrorism . . . the writer still regards himself as the Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal Terrorist forces".¹⁶

Let us cite the relevant passages in the book which might have evoked this criticism from the government. ". . . atrocities committed by the agents of the government," Subhas wrote, "and the failure of the public to secure any redress by constitutional means were responsible for provoking people to acts of terrorism as a retaliation . . . against what the revolutionaries regarded as acts of official terrorism."¹⁷ He thinks

that "... the revolutionary movement is not an anarchist movement nor is it merely a terroristic movement. The revolutionaries do not aim at creating anarchy or chaos. While it is a fact that they do occasionally resort to terrorism, their ultimate objective is not terrorism, but revolution and the purpose of the revolution is to install a National Government ... what is the remedy for it? Two courses are open to the Government—firstly, to demonstrate to the people that for winning political freedom it is not necessary to resort to revolutionary methods, and secondly, to give individual revolutionaries a chance of serving their country along peaceful and constructive lines".¹⁸ Subhas Chandra's approach towards the terroristic-revolutionary movement in the country, is clear from the above excerpts.

It amounted to his having a sympathy for the terrorists on the ground that they were driven to this desperation by the government itself, and on that account he pleaded for an amicable settlement between them, in favour of the terrorists.

But this sympathy for the terrorists did by no means imply a sympathy for or vindication of terrorism, or that he had, as Lothar Frank thinks it, any hand in the formation of these terroristic organisations, or had any close connection with them.¹⁹ It was something like a rational review of a case—the case of the terroristic movement in India—without being ideologically attached to it.

In fact, he was not convinced, as Alberto Quaroni points out, of the usefulness of terrorism, and since his college days he was opposed to such a movement.

In the absence of any political bias for terrorism in him, it is indeed a madness to think, in terms of Hugh Toye, that he was prepared to resort to terrorism to prevent a settlement between the Congress and the Government. What he was prepared to adopt as the last resort, to neutralise such a compromising tendency, was the course of armed resistance. But armed resistance is not terrorism.

He was an extremist in a sense, no doubt. "I am an extremist, all or none,"²⁰ he himself declared. But he was

so in the sense that he was prepared to accept nothing less than complete Independence for his country, and to adopt nothing short of an uncompromising struggle against the British leading even to armed revolution. This was the kind of extremism we find in him, synonymous with his bias for radicalism, and by no means interchangeable with terrorism.

Thus there was no bias for terrorism in Subhas Chandra's philosophy of revolutionary radicalism " . . . he does not regard terrorism as a healthy policy," aptly observes Romain Rolland, "(although) he is in favour of organised resistance, not excluding violence . . .".²¹

This was the first phase of the evolution of his concept of Leftism—the phase of his anti-imperialist struggle for freedom on a radical line.

NOTES

1. His personal reference to the opposition from the British and Rightist Congress.
2. Netaji's broadcast from Berlin, 31. 8. 42.
3. Special order of the Day, 25. 7. 43.
4. Address to the Indians in East Asia, 30. 7. 43.
5. 'Escape of Netaji from India to Germany'. Netaji. His Life and work. Shri Ram Sharma. Shivalal Sharma, Shivalal Agarwala & Co. Ltd., p. 156.
6. 'The Indian Situation', Address in East Asia, 10. 7. 44. *Blood Bath*, ed. Narayana Menon, The Indian Independence League, Singapore, 1944, p. 56.
7. *Op. cit.*, pp. 321-2.
8. Netaji's Speech after reading the Proclamation, Syonan, 21.10.43.
9. Report of Alberto Quaroni, Italian Minister in Kabul, to his Govt. of Rome, on his interview with Netaji in Kabul in March, 1941.
10. Secret memorandum of Subhas Chandra Bose, Berlin, 9. 4. 41.
11. Hugh Toye, *The Springing Tiger—a study of a revolutionary*, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, p. 67.
12. Quaroni's report.
13. Secret memorandum of Subhas Chandra Bose, Berlin, 9. 4. 41.
14. Kitty Kurty, *Subhas Chandra Bose as I know him*. Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, p. 50.
15. Govt. Papers, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

16. Ibid.
17. *Op. cit.*, pp. 302-3.
18. *Op. cit.*, pp. 300-1.
19. Lothar Frank, 'India's ambassador abroad', 1933-36, *A beacon across Asia—a biography of Subhas Chandra Bose*, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1973, p. 52.
20. *The Springing Tiger*—p. 59.
21. Romain Rolland, *Inde Journal*, 1915-43 (Paris, 1959), pp. 380-386.

CHAPTER V

Socialism

The Second phase of evolution was that of national reconstruction of India on the radical model of Socialism, as he visualised it, after the attainment of freedom. A socialist state could be established, he held, only after the destruction of British power. From this standpoint, he considered the struggle against the British as a stepping-stone to a new socio-economic order. In fact, he believed that the Indian movement was to be a movement of two successive revolutions which was to have two phases : the phase of national revolution and that of socialistic revolution.

Subhas Chandra's philosophy of socialism was an evolutionary process, and is to be studied under four phases.

The first phase was a military phase when the administration was to be taken over by the army, and an autocratic form of government ruled by a party with dictatorial powers, was to be indispensable for the eradication of the multifarious problems of Free India, at the initial stage of her freedom. New India was to face three upheaval tasks. Anti-national and disruptive elements that were bound to raise their heads in the wake of freedom, were to be suppressed. Last vestiges of British imperialism were to be completely wiped out thus preventing any chance of their recrudescence. National unity restored in this way, gigantic problems like that of poverty, religion, caste, education, illiteracy, near-slavery of women etc. were to be effectively tackled and combated. This herculean task, according to Subhas Chandra could be accomplished only by a ruthless military autocracy, a dictator to restore order and stability, and thus pave the way for reform in Free India. "We must have a State of an authoritarian character," he said, " . . . with a democratic system we cannot solve the problems of free India".¹ Particularly, in the

absence of proper political and administrative training of the political leaders of India, a military rule was indispensable for her according to Subhas Chandra, pending such training up of the leaders. "If our leaders are not trained for post-war leadership . . . there is every possibility that after the conquest of power a period of chaos will set in . . .", said Subhas Chandra, "the generals of the war-time period in India will have to carry through the whole programme of post-war reform in order to justify to their countrymen their hopes and aspirations that they will have to rouse during the fight. The task of these leaders will not be over till a new generation of men and women are educated and trained after the establishment of the new state and this new generation are able to take complete charge of their country's affairs".²

Thus the army should play, as Subhas Chandra saw it, a vital, pioneering, constructive role in strengthening the Central Government, in restoring national unity and in planning and executing a programme of reform in Free India.

After the initial shock of the transitional phase was over ; order, stability and national unity were restored ; and the reform programme was well on the way, the military Government or the dictator would voluntarily step down and give way to a democratic form of government.

Thus the military autocracy, as envisaged by Subhas Chandra, was to be a temporary phase in the evolution of Free India as a Democracy—a means to that end, a matter of expediency. It was not to be an unbridled dictatorship, with a power-lust and an authoritarian bias, but was a benevolent autocracy standing for national progress, popular welfare and future reform. The authoritarian state or the centralised party was interchangeable with a strong, efficient and centralised government bound by military discipline, wielding dictatorial powers for some years to come to put India on her feet, but standing for a federal government for India as its ultimate goal.

The second phase was a phase of 'tutelage'—a period of preparation—for the leaders and the people. "The problems of

Free India," Subhas Chandra held, "will be quite different from those of present-day India and it will be therefore necessary to train our men and women . . . who will be able to visualise the future, to think in terms of free India and solve those problems in anticipation. In short, it will be necessary to educate and train . . . the future cabinet of free India . . . when these morally prepared men and women are available they must be given the requisite intellectual training, so that they may be able to realise the magnitude of their task. When this intellectual training is completed we shall have a clear notion of the programme that should be put into operation when the new state is brought into existence after the seizure of power".³

The third phase would be a constitutional phase when power would be transferred from the military leaders or the party dictator to the people. A Constituent Assembly should be summoned, and a government should be formed on the basis of adult suffrage, with proper amount of decentralisation of power and enough responsibility for provincial governments, with the ultimate goal of an Independent Federal Republic or a Democratic Socialist Republic of Free India. "Free India will not be a land of capitalists, landlords and castes. Free India will be a social and political democracy,"⁴ he said.

Subhas Chandra envisaged a concrete and comprehensive plan of reform and he visualised the need of a party which was to implement a socialistic programme for India.

"It will believe in a sound system of State-planning for the reorganisation of the agricultural and industrial life of the country. It will seek to build up a new social structure on the basis of the village communities of the past, that were ruled by the village 'Panch' and will strive to break down the existing social barriers like caste.

It will seek to establish a new monetary and credit system in the light of the theories and the experiments that have been and are current in the world.

It will seek to abolish landlordism and introduce a uniform land-tenure system for the whole of India."⁵

His Samyavadi Sangha, mentioned before, was an image of such a party to fight for the successful implementation of such a radical post-war reconstruction programme. "It will be the task of this party to execute the entire programme of post-war socio-economic reconstruction The Samyavadi Sangha will stand for all-round freedom for the Indian people—that is social, economic and political freedom. It will wage a relentless war against bondage of every kind till the people can become really free."⁶ It was to create a new, independent, sovereign and socialist state in India.

At his presidential speech in the Haripura Congress he gave a clear exposition of a programme for future India. "Our chief national problems relating to the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease and to scientific production and distribution can be effectively tackled only along socialistic lines the immediate objectives will be threefold—firstly, to prepare the country for self-sacrifice, secondly, to unify India, and thirdly, to give scope for local and cultural autonomy While unifying the country through a Central Government we shall have to put all the minority communities as well as the Provinces at their ease, by allowing them a large measure of autonomy in cultural as well as governmental affairs. To promote national unity we shall have to develop our *lingua franca* and a common script (preferably Roman script)".

He also recommended a line of agrarian reform on the basis of reform of land-system, including abolition of landlordism, abolition of agricultural indebtedness, co-operative society and cheap-credit, socialisation of industries and agriculture, industrialisation without neglecting cottage industries, and national planning.

"The greatest stress should be laid on the constructive froms of activity, for instance, propagation of Khadi," he said, "promotion of prohibition, anti-touchability campaign and promotion of inter-communal understanding."⁷ His Forward Bloc stood for a socialistic programme. Thus "the Forward Bloc stands for A thoroughly modern and socialist state.

Scientific large-scale production for the economic regene-

ration of the country.

Social ownership and control of both production and distribution.

Freedom for the individual in the matter of religious worship.

Equal rights for every individual.

Linguistic and cultural autonomy for all sections of the Indian community".⁸

Again, in his address to the students of the Imperial University in Tokyo in November 1944, he envisaged a line of reform for Free India. Thus he recommended reorganisation of the army on modern and scientific line, eradication of poverty and unemployment, spread of education with at least compulsory elementary education, more facilities for the intellectual classes and adoption of Latin script for the *Lingua franca*. "Public opinion in India is that we cannot leave it to private enterprise . . . public opinion is in favour of some sort of a socialist system in which the initiative will not be left to private individual but the state will take over the responsibility".⁹ Further, in his article 'Free India and her problems', he also prescribed a programme of reform, on the line of a new civil administration, a modern national army, adequate police force, amendment of laws to punish offences against national unity, a national system of education, drive against illiteracy, and adoption of Latin or Hindusthani script for the *Lingua franca*. Again, "the Free Indian State will have to look after the welfare of labourer, providing him with a living wage, sickness insurance, compensation for accidents, etc. Similarly, the peasant will have to be given relief from excessive taxation and also from appalling indebtedness. In this connection, institutions for the welfare of labour, like 'Arbeitsdienst', 'Winterhilfe', 'Kraft durch Freude', etc. will be of great interest to India. Next in importance is public health . . . India's national economy will have to discard the gold standard and accept the doctrine that national wealth depends on Labour and production and not on gold. Foreign trade will have to be brought under State control and organised on the principle

of barter".¹⁰

These reforms, he felt, were to be indispensable for recreating Free India as a Socialist and Democratic State to be founded on perfect equality and all-round freedom—freedom not only political but also social and economic. Thus he defined 'Indian Socialism', in his Naujawan Bharat Sabha Conference speech on 27.3.31, as political freedom, complete economic emancipation and complete social equality. That is why he dreamt of a state in Free India, which "... will guarantee complete religious and cultural freedom for individuals and groups and there will be no state-religion. In the matter of political and economic rights there will be perfect equality among the whole population".

Subhas Chandra's concept of a Socialist State was based on the one hand on this doctrine of equality, on the other on a doctrine of synthesis—synthesis of ideals or knowledge.

Socialism or Democracy as he related them to the future of the Free Indian State, were no conventional political institutions but human institutions. It is the ideal of socialism and democracy and not their political norms—the ideals of equality, liberty, truth and justice—that would mould the cast of the Modern Indian Society. A synthesis of these higher ideals would provide the basis of the egalitarian society in Free India, as he saw it.

This synthesis of ideals should also be seen as a synthesis of knowledge or ideas. Thus the Socialist State as conceived by him, "is anxious to assimilate all the knowledge that the outside world can give and to profit by the experience of other progressive nations".¹¹ It was to be conservative-liberal force—a symbol of adaptation of the ideas and knowledge of different systems of the West to the indigenous structure of the Indian Society—to her tradition, culture and her basic requirements. The fundamental and original character of the Indian society was not to be sacrificed, but it was to absorb within its fold progressive ideas from the West. As he said in his presidential address in the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1931, "India should learn from and profit by the experience of other

nations, but she should be able to evolve her own methods in keeping with her own needs and her own environment". This would herald the dawn of a new India—modern, progressive, liberal and scientific, on the basis of the synthesis between the East and the West,—“ . . . a synthesis of all that is good and useful in the different movements that we see today. For this purpose we shall have to study with critical sympathy”, thus he said, “all the movements and experiments that are going on in Europe and America. And we would be guilty of folly if we ignore any movement or experiment because of our any preconceived bias or predilection”.¹²

From this perspective, Subhas Chandra's concept of Socialism was on the one hand international in character, on the other, a pragmatic, rational, scientific and an academic one. Against the background of this academic approach and as a logical corollary of it, we find his concept of socialism as a sociological process of evolution. In the light of the doctrine of equality and the doctrine of synthesis—the fundamental postulates of his scientific approach to Socialism—the image of his Socialism was an image of human progress—progress not only of India but also of the world at large. Thus his 'Samyavadi Sangha' stood “for the ultimate fulfilment of India's mission, so that India may be able to deliver to the world the message that has been her heritage through the past ages”,¹³ while his Forward Bloc regards progress or evolution as an eternal process, to which it has also a contribution to make for “the cause of India, of humanity and of human progress”.¹⁴

From this point of view Indian Socialism was co-terminus with Indian nationalism, to Subhas Chandra, as a consequential phase in the evolution of world culture and civilisation.

This concept of socialism of Subhas Chandra we may call 'Samyavadi Socialism', inasmuch as the doctrines of equality and synthesis—on which it stands were co-terminus with 'Samyavada'. As Subhas Chandra himself writes that, “ . . . 'Samyavada'—an Indian word, [which] means literally 'the doctrine of synthesis or equality'”.¹⁵ Further, in a

letter to Kitty Kurty he wrote, on 23. 2. 34, "Samya means equality. Samyavadi means one who believes in equality".¹⁶ The image of his 'Samyavadi Sangha', was erected on these ideas, reproduced as a practical weapon in the Forward Bloc.

Another facet of his theory of Socialism was Municipal Socialism. The fundamental idea behind it was to utilise the Municipality for the service of the community as a whole and not merely for the civic affairs. The problem is to be studied from five angles : nationalism, democracy, socialism, humanitarianism and conservatism.

The bureaucratic character of the Corporation was to be replaced by a national character. By devoting itself to popular welfare and national service, it would imbibe a new civic consciousness—harbinger of a national consciousness.

The Constitution of the Municipality was to be democratic in character. "I welcome the decision to do away with the limited franchise in the Bombay Municipal elections", he observed, "... I wish that the other provinces would take a leaf out of Bombay's forward march, especially in the matter of introduction of the system of adult franchise".¹⁷

The Corporation would stand for a programme of progressive reforms, particularly with an eye to ameliorate the condition of the poor. Thus as the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation he tried to set up a precedent of such an honest endeavour. "Many of the streets and parks were renamed after India's greatest men. For the first time an Education Department was started . . . Free Primary schools for boys and girls sprang up all over the city. Health Associations, financed by the Municipality, were started in every ward of the city by public-spirited citizens for carrying on health propaganda among the people. Dispensaries were opened by the Municipality in the different districts for giving free medical treatment to the poor. In purchasing stores, preference was given to Swadeshi goods . . . Infant clinics were established in different parts of the city and to each clinic was added a milk-kitchen for supplying milk free to the children of the poor . . . the above measures adopted for promoting

the welfare of the citizens brought about a new civic consciousness. People for the first time began to look upon Municipality as their own institutions - and upon Municipal officers and employees as public servants and not bureaucrats."¹⁸ Moreover, the Corporation was also to look after the slums and the poor people living in wretched conditions.

Municipal Socialism, Subhas Chandra observed, was nothing but a collective effort to serve the entire community. If that were done, the Corporation would serve not only the city concerned but humanity as a whole. The Municipality, he points out, had effectively solved the problem of water-supply, roads, education for children, health, infant mortality and hundreds of other problems. If so much could be done in one city, he felt, it had its importance in other parts of the world.

He further points out that the essential character of Municipal Socialism should be Indian. "It had been frequently said by the foreigners that municipal development in India has been done due to contact with the West, and that before that contact very little had been achieved in India. I want to give direct lie to this claim. In municipal matters Indians are building on the ancient foundations . . . It is necessary to remind ourselves about this as due to long servitude we have forgotten our own past."¹⁹ As an example he referred to the municipality works of Mohenjodaro and Pataliputra.

This was Subhas Chandra's concept of Municipal Socialism. According to Bright, it was to him the best remedy for the multifarious ills of India. Subhas Chandra's philosophy of Municipal Socialism, Bright continues, was the most human form of democracy, akin to the concept of justice and fairplay in Greek city states.²⁰ Thus Subhas Chandra was "a true socialist",²¹ but, it is also true that his philosophy of Socialism did not conform to any established school of socialist thought, viz., Socialism of the Congress Socialist Party, or Marxian Socialism, or Communism.

"I hold no brief for the Congress Socialist Party," he said at Haripura, "I am not a member of it. Nevertheless,

I must say that I have been in agreement with its general principles and policy from the very beginning. In the first place it is desirable for the leftist elements to be consolidated into one party. Secondly, a leftist bloc can have *raison d'être* only if it is socialist in character socialist propaganda is necessary to prepare the country for socialism when political freedom has been won".²²

So far as the C.S.P. represented a radical tendency, Subhas Chandra's political bias was in accord with it. But that was the limit of their agreement. The radical spirit of the party failed to fructify, as he saw it, due to some inherent defects within it. These drawbacks he sharply criticised.

The ideas of the C.S.P., he points out, were very backward. It "... seems to think that the constitutional problem in India should be solved by a Constituent Assembly The historical example of a Constituent Assembly was afforded by France and this was followed by the United States of America. A century and a half have elapsed since the Constituent Assembly met in Paris in order to draw up a Constitution for France".²³ Subhas Chandra was opposed to this method of the C.S.P. on two grounds. A Constituent Assembly, if convened before the attainment of independence and under the aegis of the British Government would be not only premature and unscientific, it would simply be a farce. It would be rather a glorified all-party Conference, a pseudo-Constituent Assembly than a real one, the question of whose summoning may arise only after the attainment of freedom. It was not for the British, he held, to give India a Constitution—a popular Constitution would flow out of a revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

A Constituent Assembly should not be, he felt, even summoned immediately after getting freedom in India. It should be deferred until order and stability are restored to a satisfactory extent under a short-term dictatorship. In the face of the magnitude of the task involved in this respect, a Constituent Assembly, a Democracy would be quite incapable of dealing with it effectively at this initial stage of transition.

To summon a Constituent Assembly at the very outset would amount to putting the cart before the horse. The Congress Socialist Party "lacked a clear revolutionary perspective", according to Subhas Chandra, "from the outset : It began to function more as a parliamentary opposition within the Congress than as the spearhead of a revolutionary movement. After September 1939, the leaders of the party were won over by Gandhi and Nehru and that blasted the future of the Party".²⁴

"The Congress Socialist Party seems to be under the influence of Fabian Socialism which was the fashion in England 50 years ago. Since then, much water has flown down the Thames and also down the Ganges. So many developments have taken place in different parts of the world since the end of the great war and so many socio-economic experiments have been and are being made—that a modern party cannot afford to hark back to the idea and shibboleths prevalent in Europe 4 or 5 decades ago".²⁵

Furthermore, the C.S.P., he points out, talked too much about Socialism, which was after all a thing of the future—and as such committed a mistake. "Socialism or Socialist reconstruction before achieving our political emancipation is altogether premature".²⁶ And he held that it is only after the "attainment of political independence . . . a new phase [will begin] . . . a Socialist one".²⁷

Thus to Subhas Chandra, the C.S.P., although talked of leftism, did not possess the essential requisites of a modern, leftist party. It was, to him, a pseudo-leftist party in reality, devoid of practical judgement.

It is natural that we cannot identify his idea of leftism with this kind of pseudo-leftism.

With regard to a comparison between Subhas Chandra's philosophy of Socialism and Marxian Socialism, the following points are to be noted.

While Marxian Socialism was essentially and exclusively materialistic, Subhas Chandra's was a golden mean between the extreme schools of materialism and spiritualism. Both an

idealist and a pragmatist, Subhas Chandra believed in Socialism as a fulfilment of the higher ideals of truth and justice on the one hand, on the other, as a materialistic and realistic necessity for the national reconstruction of his country. He was opposed to any excess of materialism as we find in Marxism. Western culture, he held, had arrived at a dangerous point because of its complete spiritual bankruptcy. There was an impoverishment, a drying-up of the spirit caused by exaggerated materialism. Its remedy he visualised in "a society based on the maximum spiritual and psychic development of the individual".²⁸ This spiritual aspect of his Socialism, this factor of balance between spiritualism and materialism in his theory of Socialism, are conspicuous by their absence in Marxism. According to Subhas Chandra Marx had given an exaggerated importance to the economic factor—as the sole determining factor in the evolution of humanity and community. He believed that history and civilisation were the product of a comprehensive process of evolution, composed of all factors—political, economic and social etc. From this standpoint, the difference between the Marxian approach to history and his approach, was, to put in the language of Amar Nandi, a difference between Marx's monistic interpretation and his pluralistic interpretation of history.²⁹

Although both Marx and Subhas Chandra believed in the 'Dialectic', or in a dialectical process of evolution, method of its application differed in them. Marx applied it to determine economic developments on the basis of evolution in the modes of production. "At a certain stage of development", thus he wrote, "it (mode of production) brings forth the material agencies for its own dissolution. From that moment new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society, but the old organization fetters them and keeps them down. It must be annihilated, it is annihilated. Its annihilation, the transformation of the individualized and scattered means of production into a socially concentrated one . . . expropriation of the great mass of the people from the soil forms the prelude to the history of the Capital."³⁰ To Subhas Chandra the

'dialectic' was a determining factor in the progress of life, in the evolution of humanity and community, political and organisational developments.³¹ Moreover, his concept of the dialectic had a humanistic element, a sociological factor, love being held by him to be the essence of the process of creation or evolution. This element was not there in Marx.

Subhas Chandra repudiated the concept of class struggle—the fundamental postulate of Marxism "class-conflict is something that is quite unnecessary in India. If the Government of India begins to work as the organ of the masses, then there is no need for class-conflict—the State will be the servant of the masses".³² This point is, however, controversial, inasmuch as, according to some scholars, he believed in class-struggle. For example Ruikar is of the view that as a believer in Socialism and dialectics, he accepted class-struggle as a necessary fact—the conflict between the thesis and the antithesis of capitalist exploiters on the one hand and the exploited masses on the other".³³

This observation is largely based on Subhas Chandra's statement in 'The Indian struggle', that "... the 'haves' will in future fight shy of the 'have-nots' in the political fight and will gradually incline towards the British Government The political struggle and the social struggle will have to be conducted simultaneously".³⁴

But this struggle was not a class-struggle because of two factors. It was the part of a political struggle—a political struggle between the British Imperialists and their Indian allies on the one hand and the Nationalists on the other—between the pro-British capitalists and the anti-British masses in India. It was not a socio-economic struggle between the capitalists and the exploited masses as Ruikar thinks it. Again, to Subhas Chandra this struggle was not a means to the end of a socialist State, rather this was a hindrance in the way of the latter, being a thorn in the flesh of national unity on which the socialist State would be, according to Subhas Chandra, founded. He rather thought that "to introduce fresh cleavage within our ranks by talking openly of class-war

and working for it appears to me at the present moment to be a crime against nationalism".³⁵

In this light, Ruikar's view should be rejected as untrue. Again, with regard to the conflict between the Forward Bloc and the Congress he felt that, "Behind the apparent party struggle within the Congress there is in reality a class-struggle going on all the time."³⁶ But his idea was not to exploit this struggle, rather he was most concerned as to how the struggle could be replaced by unity between the congress and the Bloc. These ideas of Subhas Chandra testify to his repudiation of Marxian class struggle. There were other important points of difference between Subhas Chandra and Marx. Thus the Marxian postulate of proletarian dictatorship had no place in Subhas Chandra's theory of Socialism, while the latter's philosophy of Samyavadi Socialism and Municipal Socialism as discussed above, had no place in Marxism. Again, the educational aspect of Socialism as we have found in Subhas Chandra's theory of 'Samyavadi Socialism', was absent in Marxian Socialism. More, while Marx neglected the peasants, Subhas Chandra championed their cause and viewed the peasant movement as an indispensable part of the freedom movement and their liberation an inseparable aspect of national emancipation. He, however, believed like Marx, that destruction of capitalism would lead to a socialist State.

In the light of the above discussion we find that Subhas Chandra's concept of Socialism, was completely different from Marxism. Subhas Chandra was by no means a Marxist, as is held to be by some scholars. "[Indian] Socialism did not derive its birth," said Subhas Chandra himself, "from the books of Karl Marx. It has its origin in the thought and culture of India."³⁷ This conservative character of his concept of socialism, demanded that Indian socialism must have its roots in the Indian soil, and its basic condition should be the fulfilment of the needs, and preservation of the traditions, of the Indian society. This indigenous character of his ideal of socialism could hardly conform to a Western brand of socialism like Marxism. Marxism, he rejected as alien to the

Indian context. But was Subhas Chandra a Communist? Did his theory of socialism conform to Communism? This is the question we should now attempt to answer.

Marxism was restated by Lenin in the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution. And his interpretation of Marxism was the starting point of Communism. It is true that in China the organic Law of 1949 introduced some changes in the concept of Communism, but in the context of our discussion of Subhas Chandra's political philosophy, this does not concern us inasmuch as he died in 1945.

Marxism-Leninism theory is the official position of Russian Communism, where the basic structure of Marxism was retained, as we find in Lenin's 'Materialism and Empirio Criticism', and 'State and Revolution', but the following changes were incorporated into Marxism by Lenin. These are now to be noted in contrast with Subhas Chandra's concept of socialism.

Lenin conceived the dialectic as a universal science applicable to every field of science and thought it to be equally valid in determining the aesthetic values of art and literature. To Subhas Chandra, on the other hand, the dialectic was a determining factor in the progress of life, in the evolution of humanity and community, and in political and organisational development.

The keynote to Lenin's revision of Marxism lay in his theory of the party conceived as a moral and intellectual elite providing the guidance and leadership to all working-class movements and is distinguished from the body of workers. Through the dictatorship of this party, the vanguard of the proletariat, would come the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Subhas Chandra's theory of socialism, we find no proletarian dictatorship. There was, however, a phase of party dictatorship in his theory of socialism, but that was a temporary phase ultimately to give way to the phase of democracy, as we have noted above.

According to Lenin, the working class have no natural inclination for revolution and aside from the influence of the

party they have no conscious activity and have to derive their ideas from the Marxist professionals. This type of educational function of Socialism in Lenin,—a distinguishing feature from Marxism—was absent in Subhas Chandra's philosophy of Socialism. Although there was an educational phase in his theory of socialism—a phase of tutelage for the leaders and the people, for equipping them with the requisite administrative training he never dwelt upon the need of any training for the working class.

With Lenin, a difference of opinion was a moral issue and his opponents' philosophy was for him the mark of a guilty conscience. This aspect of quasi-clericalism in communism was absent in Subhas Chandra's concept of Socialism.

Although Subhas Chandra agreed with the Marxist-Leninist contention that an imperialist war was a unique opportunity for achieving freedom for a country, he did not subscribe to the view of communism that an imperialist war was a social phenomenon at a definite stage of capitalist evolution to be turned into a proletarian revolution.

The concept of materialistic interpretation of history, class struggle or of a classless society as envisaged in Communism, had no place as we have seen above in Subhas Chandra's theory of Socialism. Again, while to the Communists violence is a creed, to Subhas Chandra it is the last resort, and while the communists are atheists, Subhas Chandra was a deeply religious man. Further, he was not interested in the fundamentals of communist economy like 'labour theory of value' or 'surplus value'.

Parliamentary democracy is denounced by the Communists as a bourgeois institution, hypocritical and false to the core, while Subhas Chandra believed in parliamentary democracy, although he was in favour of deferring it at the initial stage of India's recovery after freedom—the stage of a stop-gap militaristic rule. Finally, Subhas Chandra's philosophy of Samyavadi Socialism and Municipal Socialism examined above, had no role in Communism.

Thus there were fundamental and vital points of difference between Communism and Subhas Chandra's theory of Socialism, the only point of similarity being that both Lenin and he espoused the cause of the peasants neglected by Marx. Hence Subhas Chandra's theory of Socialism cannot be equated with Communism. Communism, he held, was unsuitable for India and would not be adopted in India for several reasons.

"Communism today has no sympathy with Nationalism in any form and the Indian movement is a Nationalist movement—a movement for the national liberation of the Indian people. Secondly Russia is now on her defensive and has little interest in provoking a world revolution, though the Communist International may still endeavour to keep up appearances. The recent pacts between Russia and other Capitalist countries and the written or unwritten conditions inherent in such pacts ; as also her membership of the League of Nations, have seriously compromised the position of Russia as a revolutionary power. Moreover, Russia is too pre-occupied in her internal reorganisation and in her preparations for meeting the Japanese menace on her eastern flank and is too anxious to maintain friendly relations with the Great Powers, to show any active interest in countries like India. Thirdly, while many of the economic ideas of Communism would make a strong appeal to Indians, there are other ideas which will have a contrary effect. Owing to the close association between the Church and the state in Russian history and to the existence of an organised Church, Communism in Russia, has grown to be anti-religious and atheistic. In India, on the contrary, there being no organised Church among the Indians and there being no association between the Church and the State, there is no feeling against religion as such. Fourthly, the materialistic interpretation of history which seems to be a cardinal point in Communist theory will not find unqualified acceptance in India, even among those who would be disposed to accept the economic contents of Communism. Fifthly, while Communist theory had made

certain remarkable contributions in the domain of economics (for instance the idea of state-planning), it is weak in other aspects. For instance, so far as the monetary problem is concerned, Communism has made no new contribution, but has merely followed traditional economics therefore it would be safe to predict that India will not become a new edition of Soviet Russia. . . ."³⁸

In fact, the conservative character of Socialism in his political thought demanded that Indian Socialism must have its roots in the Indian soil. Communism from this point of view, was held by him to be alien to the indigenous soil of India, and thus he criticised the National Front or the Indian Communists. "The Communist lacked a proper national perspective and could not develop as the organ of national struggle. Not having its roots in the soil, this party very often erred in estimating a particular situation or crisis and consequently adopted a wrong policy."³⁹ Nay, he felt wondered that ". . . . the National Front group are not coming forward to join the national struggle their present policy seems to be almost like a dog in the manger policy. They will neither join the struggle themselves, nor permit others to do so."⁴⁰

The C.P.I. had no ideological affinity, Goel notes, with Subhas Chandra Bose.

Thus Subhas Chandra was not a Communist. Even Hugh Toye admits it—"It was not that he was a Communist."⁴¹ Kitty Kurty makes more or less similar observation when she said that ". . . . he was more of a Socialist than a Communist."⁴²

Thus Subhas Chandra's theory of socialism did not conform to a conventional standard, it was neither Marxism, nor Communism, nor socialism of the C.S.P.

It was also not a synthesis between Communism and Fascism, as is sometimes held to be. As Hugh Toye points out that "Bose pointed to a new way for India, a middle way between Communism and Fascism"⁴³ Again, a British review of 'The Indian Struggle', observes that, "he

condemned Communism as unsuitable for India but he advocates some measure half-way between Fascism and Communism.”⁴⁴ And Shivrām is of opinion that “Subhas planned a fascist-communist dictatorship for India, combining the politics of fascism and the economics of Communism. . .”⁴⁵

This theory is mainly based on the statement made by Subhas Chandra himself in *The Indian Struggle*, that the next phase in world-history will produce a synthesis between Communism and Fascism.⁴⁶ And the basis of this synthesis, he saw, would be the common trait of Communism and Fascism namely—supremacy of the state over the individual repudiation of parliamentary democracy, belief in party rule and dictatorship of the party, ruthless suppression of minorities and a planned industrial reorganisation of the country.

We should examine the problem from two perspectives.

On the one hand we must understand properly what he really meant by this reference to the ‘synthesis’. He himself clarified its meaning to R. Palme Dutta. “My political ideas have developed further since I wrote my book three years ago.” He said, “What I really meant was that . . . we wanted to move in the direction of Socialism. This is what I meant when I referred to a synthesis between Communism and Fascism. Perhaps the expression I used was not a happy one. But I should like to point out that when I was writing the book, Fascism had not started on its imperialist expedition and it appeared to me merely an aggressive form of nationalism. I should also point out that Communism as it appeared to be demonstrated by many of those who were supposed to stand for it in India seemed to me anti-national and this impression was further strengthened in view of the hostile attitude which several among them exhibited towards the Indian National Congress.”⁴⁷

Thus it is clear from this passage that what he really meant by this reference to “synthesis”, was Socialism as a fulfilment of nationalism, as a “synthesis of the systems in vogue in different parts of the world”,—a “synthesis of knowledge”

as we have seen above in the context of his theory of Samyavadi Socialism and not really a synthesis between Communism and Fascism.

With regard to the common features of Communism and Fascism stated above, we find that he envisaged the necessity of an authoritarian state or dictatorship of a party, parliamentary democracy being kept in abeyance, at the initial stage of recovery or reconstruction of Free India. But order and stability restored, he felt, they were to give way voluntarily to a democracy, to a Socialist State. Thus in Subhas Chandra's theory of Samyavadi Socialism authoritarianism or dictatorship were temporary necessities, whereas in Communism and Fascism they are permanent features. Again, Communism and Fascism are dogmatically opposed to democracy while the roads of Samyavadi Socialism of Subhas Chandra, led to democracy. Thus the "synthesis", referred to above, was a synthesis of Socialism and democracy, and not a synthesis between Fascism and Communism. True that he advocated national planning, but this alone cannot imply any bias for Communism. He did not believe, as we have seen above, in the fundamentals of Communist economy.

Thus Subhas Chandra's theory of Socialism did not conform to any conventional form of socialism or to any so-called "ism". "Socialism today has different complexions and therefore different connotations," he wrote, "when used by different people. And there seems to be hardly anything in common between the Socialism of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and the militant policy and method of the Socialists of Spain. To some people, again, Socialism is synonymous with Communism. Why then use a terminology which is used by different people in different senses."⁴⁸

His theory of Socialism was entirely an original theory—an academic, scientific and sociological concept of a national application of the 'synthesis of knowledge', or ideals for Socialism and democracy to the needs and traditions of the Indian society.

This was the process and nature of evolution of the concept of leftism in Subhas Chandra's political thought up to the pre-I.N.A. phase—a concept synonymous with nationalism, anti-imperialism, radicalism and socialism.

NOTES

1. Address to the Students of Imperial University, Tokyo, November 1944.
2. Presidential address, Third Indian Political Conference, Friars Hall, London, 10. 6. 33.
3. Presidential address, Third Indian Political Conference, London, 10. 6. 33.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Op. cit.*, p. 312.
6. Third Indian Political Conference, London, 10. 6. 33.
7. Press Statement, 6. 4. 39.
8. Thesis written by Netaji during his secret sojourn in Kabul, reprinted in the *Indian Struggle*, p. 395.
9. Imperial University address, Tokyo.
10. Wille and Macht, August 1942, reprinted in *Azad Hind*.
11. *Op. cit.*, p. 414.
12. 'Our Internal and External Policy'—Statement from Geneva, February 1935.
13. Third Indian Political Conference, London, 10. 6. 33.
14. *Op. cit.*, p. 414
15. *Op. cit.*, p. 314.
16. Kitty Kurty, *Subhas Chandra Bose as I knew him*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1966, p. 59.
17. The Calcutta Municipal Gazette, Netaji Birthday Supplement, LXXXX No. 15, 24. 1. 70, p. 42.
18. *Op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.
19. The Calcutta Municipal Gazette, *Op. cit.*
20. J. S. Bright, *Important speeches and writings of Subhas Bose*, The Indian Printing Works, Lahore, 1947, p. 180.
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22. *Crossroads: The works of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, p. 24.
23. *Op. cit.*, p. 384.
24. *Op. cit.*, p. 337.

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 337
26. *Op. cit.*, p. 409.
27. 'The Role of Forward Bloc', Forward Bloc editorial, 12. 8. 39.
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29. Amar Nandi, *What Netaji Stands for*. R. Dutta, Calcutta, 1946, p. 22.
30. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Indian ed. by L. G. Ardinichas, Saraswati Library, Calcutta, p. 587.
31. For detailed discussion see Chapter I.
32. Address to the students of Imperial University, Tokyo, November, 1944.
33. *Ideology of Netaji*, p. 10.
34. *Op. cit.*, p. 298.
35. P. C. Roy, *Subhas Chandra*, Mitra Brothers, Rajsahi, 1929, p. 18.
36. Forward Bloc editorial, 30. 12. 39.
37. Address at Rangpur.
38. *Op. cit.*, pp. 314-15.
39. *Op. cit.*, p. 337.
40. Forward Bloc editorial, 13. 4. 40.
41. *The Springing Tiger*, p. 41.
42. Kitty Kurty, *Subhas Chandra Bose as I knew him*, p. 50.
43. *The Springing Tiger*, p. 44.
44. Govt. Documents, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
45. Shivram : *The Road to Delhi*, pp. 119-20.
46. *Op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.
47. *Op. cit.*, pp. 393-94.
48. *Op. cit.*, pp. 383-84.

PART II

Netaji and the I.N.A.



CHAPTER I

The Concept and Character of Netaji's I.N.A.

Netaji's philosophy of the I.N.A. is to be studied, from three perspectives—political, military and administrative.

His I.N.A. was a political force, military force and an administrative organ.

From the political point of view, the locus standi of the I.N.A. according to some scholars, was that of a state or a government. With the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, recognised by Japan, they argue the I.N.A. got a statehood, and it was on the level of a state and not of an individual that the I.N.A. war was fought out. Seen from this angle, the I.N.A. movement was, according to these scholars, not insurgency. Thus according to A. C. Chatterjee, Minister of Finance in the Azad Hind Government, there were some positive considerations, for which Subhas Chandra formed the Free India Government in East Asia. They are as follows :

- (1) Attainment of statehood and waging of the I.N.A. war as the war of a state against a state and not of an individual against a state.
- (2) International status—The I.N.A. Government as a Free India Government would be a member of the family of nations and would thus acquire an international status.
- (3) Popular confidence and spirit—as a true national war, the I.N.A. war would evoke greater public support and enthusiasm, than was to be expected in the case of a rebellion or insurgency.
- (4) Territorial expansion in course of military operations and opening of new fronts accordingly.

"It was because of these important considerations," saw Chatterjee, "That. . . Netaji Subhas Chandra. . . conceived the idea of formation and establishment of the Provisional Government of Free India."¹

This proposition cannot be accepted. Mere recognition of the I.N.A. Government by Japan did not give it the status of statehood. For the attainment of statehood there are two indispensable requisites, viz territorial sovereignty and habitual obedience of the majority of the people. But none of these tests were fulfilled by the Provisional Government of Azad Hind of Subhas Chandra. It had no territories under its sovereign control. Sahid (Andaman) and Swaraj (Nicobar Islands) were promised by Japan to be restored to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, but that was not done. In fact, it could not be done in the case of a provisional government, strictly speaking in terms of international law.

Secondly, the I.N.A. exploits were unknown to the Indian people until 1945. Hence the question of their obedience to the I.N.A. Government did not arise at all in this case. Thus the second essential of statehood—habitual obedience of the majority Indians to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind was conspicuous by its absence here. It only commanded the obedience of a handful minority of overseas Indians.

It is in this light that the British Government observed that "it did not constitute a large portion of the population of the state against the legitimate government".²

Thus the I.N.A. movement of Subhas Chandra was not a movement of a state against a state. It was an insurgency, a national war of independence, second after the 1857 Mutiny.

The I.N.A. was not a political party. Although it was not unlikely that after freedom, "the Forward Bloc and the I.N.A. will . . . formally join up and . . . they will also seek the co-operation of other leftist elements for putting up a joint front on the basis of an agreed programme,"³ and

may thus attain a party—status being merged with the Forward Bloc, but that was a question of possibility, a question of the future. So far as the real story was concerned, the I.N.A. was not a party. "The I N. A. was not a party within the state opposing the legitimate government" ⁴ Netaji had no personal stake in the I.N.A. movement—no motive of self-interest or power-lust on the part of him, no hidden intention to capture leadership of Free Indian state. The leader of future India would be chosen, he told Tojo, by the people. He was the head of the I.N.A., both at the administrative and the army level, but that was exclusively a question of effective guidance, supervision, control and co-ordination, a question of policy-making. "He wished to discourage the personal aspect of the movement as far as his own name was concerned." Ayer points out "and told the I.N.A. men that they should concentrate on and popularise ideas and ideals and not personalities." ⁵

From the military standpoint, the I.N.A. stood for a determined fight to expel the British from India. British imperialism, Netaji held, was the greatest enemy in the path of India's freedom, progress and unity. He was convinced of the necessity of a strong, national army to drive them out and achieve India's freedom. Particularly, ". . . after the fall of France," he felt, "in June 1940, the Indian army was in a mood in which there was utter lack of confidence in British military strength. That was the proper psychological moment for a revolution, but it was not availed of by the Indian people. A similar opportunity will come again when Britain receives another severe blow at the hands of the Axis powers In that revolutionary crisis the British Government will have only the British soldiers to fall back upon. If at this juncture, some military help is available from abroad (i.e. a small force of 50,000 men with modern equipment) British power in India can be completely wiped out." ⁶

Hence his I.N.A. to launch the struggle, and to conduct the struggle he formed the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. "The Provisional Government of Azad Hind

has only one mission to fulfil. That mission is to expel the Anglo-American armies from the sacred soil of India by armed force”⁷ Because “it is only out of the defeat of the Anglo-American imperialism that I can hope to win her freedom,”⁸ he said. “Let us therefore carry on fight for liberty inside India and outside India India will once again emerge an independent nation.”⁹ “With the force of arms and at the cost of your blood,” thus he exhorted his soldiers, “you will have to win liberty.”¹⁰ Thus the I.N.A. symbolised a revolution against foreign rule—a revolutionary national war against the British. And under the revolutionary leadership of Netaji, it would fight tooth and nail to bring about India’s freedom. “We weld ourselves into an army that will have only one goal—namely the freedom of India, and only one will—namely to do or die in the cause of India’s freedom. When we stand, the Azad Hind Fauj has to be like a wall of granite ; when we march ; the Azad Hind Fauj has to be like a steam-roller.”¹¹ This was to be the true character of the revolutionary army of Subhas Chandra, based on his firm belief that “no revolutionary army could ever be defeated, because revolutionary war once begun, passed on from sire to son.”¹²

Another face of this anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle of the I.N.A. was its insatiable spirit of nationalism or patriotism. Netaji’s I.N.A. was a symbol of nationalism. Its character was out and out national. It was composed exclusively of the Indians. There was no non-Indian element in the army. “The statements of the POW who have escaped from the Japanese, leave little doubt that the force... includes Indian personnel.”¹³ They were all Indians, Indians first and Indians last, irrespective of caste, race or religion. “All Indians in East Asia are united regardless of religion or caste and they are determined to fight for the freedom of their common motherland.”¹⁴

Thus “ the I.N.A. symbolised a united Indian struggle against British colonialism—it was the first cross-communal united nationalist movement.”¹⁵ It was truly a

national army of India. The fundamental basis of the I.N.A. was national unity. Its only objective was to supplement the national struggle going on within India, achieve national independence and establish national sovereignty. "My object in leaving India," Netaji said, "was to supplement from outside the struggle going on at home."¹⁶ With this purpose he started an intensive radio campaign from East Asia and delivered fiery speeches to tone up the morale of the Indians and foment a revolution in India. The approach to these broadcasts was, as in the case of the Free India Radio Station at Berlin, based on two lines: to convince the Indians of the sure defeat of the Anglo-Americans in the war, thereby instilling into them courage, strength and energy, and secondly to induce and encourage them to start a revolution immediately "he would show . . . that the movement could be important . . . in their whole political and propaganda effort. Names cries, slogans were of more significance at this stage than action—even military action."

Thus it was by no means an independent movement—but was simply an extension of the national movement of the Congress in India—the second front of the Indian Independence movement. "Subhas Bose always regarded the I.N.A. movement," writes Girija Mukherjee, "as a projection, albeit active, of the movement for independence carried on by the Congress at home."¹⁷ This view has been supported by K.K. Ghosh.^{17a}

"Like that earlier Marco Polo of the East, Raja Mahendra Pratap," observes Walter Leifer, "Subhas Bose had the charisma of a popular revolutionary . . . Having preached uncompromising fight against the British in India, he carried that fight abroad."¹⁸ Even the British Government visualised the I.N.A. as a military wing of any future uprising by the Congress.¹⁹

Thus the I.N.A. movement and the Congress national movement were two links in the same chain of the struggle for independence of India. The I.N.A. was thus pledged to the liberation of their country and countrymen, and this

ardour of nationalism, this fervour of patriotism were the sacred fire lit ablaze in the heart of every soldier of the I.N.A. and in the mind of their leader Netaji, throughout. "In the name of God . . . I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and thirty eight crores of my countrymen, I Subhas Chandra Bose will continue this sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life."²⁰ Thus the I.N.A. was a truly national, revolutionary army.

We now turn to the administrative aspect of the I.N.A. or to the I.N.A. Government.

The Provisional Government of Free India was constituted by the Indian Independence League, inasmuch as "the Indian Independence League (was) . . . the only representative organ," as Subhas Chandra saw it, of the Indians in East Asia . . . and is competent to form such a government."²¹ Netaji would have been the happiest man on earth if such a government was formed within India. That being not possible, he formed it abroad as a government of all the Indians, whether at home or abroad. "Now that the dawn of freedom is at hand," thus he said, "it is the duty of the Indian people to set up a Provisional Government of their own, and launch the last struggle under the banner of that Government. But with all the Indian leaders in prison and the people at home totally disarmed—it is not possible to set up a Provisional Government within India to launch an armed struggle under the aegis of that government. It is therefore, the duty of the Indian Independence League in East Asia, supported by all patriotic Indians at home and abroad, to undertake this task . . ."²² This Provisional Government was no normal peacetime government, it was a fighting organisation and its basis was nationalistic, popular and its character democratic. It was formed to fulfil the task of the I.N.A.—to successfully conduct the national war against Britain, achieve national independence for India and establish her national sovereignty. It was the task of this Provisional Government to lead the Indian revolution to a successful completion. "It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch and

conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind”²³ The Indian National Army, the Indian Independence League and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, were three links in the same chain of the I.N.A. movement—“With the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, the second dream of my political life has been fulfilled—the first being the organisation of a national revolutionary army. One dream now remains to be fulfilled, namely, to fight and win our freedom.”²⁴

The Provisional Government was to be a government of the people, for the people, and by the people—“ . . . the only lawful government of the Indian people.”²⁵ After the attainment of freedom “ . . . it will make room for a permanent government to be set up inside India, in accordance with the will of the Indian people.”²⁶ and “until a permanent National Government of Azad Hind is set up on the Indian soil the Provisional Government will administer the affairs of the country in trust for the Indian people.”²⁷

The national and popular character of the I.N.A. was illustrated by the commotion that was let loose by the I.N.A. trial. “The situation in respect of the Indian National Army is one which warrants disquiet.” Home Dept. of the British Government observed, “There has seldom been a matter which has attracted so much public interest, and it is safe to say, sympathy.”²⁸ The whole nation would rise in arms, The British feared, if any harm was done to the I.N.A. men. “If I.N.A. men suffered in any way the students and youths of the country would launch a struggle which would compel the British to quit India.”²⁹ Nay, it was truly apprehended by them that the Indians would not spare “their last drop of blood in saving their lives and ask the people to keep themselves in readiness for a movement.”³⁰ Thus “the British understood the meaning of the demonstrations held in India in support of the I.N.A.”³¹

And the magnitude of the agitation was amply borne out by the Government's serious concern about the matter. "The manner in which the entire matter has been dealt with" a circular from the Government of Bengal stated, "by the government of India and their failure to control the violent press and platform campaign for the wholesale glorification of the I.N.A. are having a dangerously adverse effect on the loyalists and supporters of the established order. The military authority in Bengal are already seriously concerned about the effect on the morale of the Indian army . . ."³² It was also observed by the Government circle that "these trials of the I.N.A. personnel are no longer merely a military matter, but have been given a very strong political character by the Congress."³³ Thus the British Government admitted it that the arrival of these men caused a political flare, and they were constrained to take proper cognisance of it. They had to take "the decision that there should be no detention under ordinance without trial,"³⁴ and that "all possible steps have been taken and will continue to be taken to afford every facility to the defence and to ensure fair trial . . ."³⁵ Nay, "the Provisional government would request that the arrangement of the release of the members should be strictly adhered to."³⁶

This picture of widespread national or popular agitation clearly testifies to the national or popular basis of the I.N.A. movement under Subhas Chandra Bose. The character of the provisional government was also democratic through and through. It was wedded to the ideals of democracy and its working procedure was also democratic. It was pledged to liberty, equality, justice, fraternity and religious catholicity. "The Provisional Government. . . guarantees religious liberty as well equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens. It declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally and transcending all the differences cunningly fostered by an alien government in the past."³⁷

Thus the provisional government recognised no distinc-

tion with regard to caste, class, race, religion or sex, and afforded equal opportunities and facilities to all sorts of persons. Thus the most devoted generals of Subhas Chandra, Shah Nawaz Khan, and the Giani brothers—were Muslims, while Colonel Stracey, an Anglo-Indian, was entrusted with the assignment of raising a memorial to the martyrs in Singapur. The national anthem of the I.N.A. Government Kadam Kadam Barae ja—was composed by a Muslim, Hussain who was rewarded by him for his contribution. To cite another instance, when the trustees of a temple invited Subhas Chandra to visit the shrine, he agreed to go only if he could take his colleagues with him, irrespective of their religion. "Such instances as Jog puts it," could be multiplied.

"Through the I.N.A. and the Provisional Government of Free India," writes Shri Ram Sharma, "Netaji has practically demonstrated for all times to come that different races and different religionists of India can unite together, work together, live together and die together, if necessary, under one flag as brothers."³⁸

The procedure of administration in the Provisional Government, as followed by Subhas Chandra, was also democratic. "He was a stickler for democratic procedure,"³⁹ observes, Ayer. He insisted on calling a cabinet meeting every time policy was to be decided. And in the meetings he would explain in details his ideas and plans, listen attentively to the different views of his colleagues, answer any objection and proceed to the way, by means of mutual consultation, of the ultimate fruition of his plan.

Thus the character of the I.N.A. was nationalistic, patriotic, popular and democratic.

The I.N.A. plan of Subhas Chandra, thus we find, was based on the line of his plan of the Indian revolution in Germany.

Thus the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India), was another version of the 'Free India Government' scheme, the Indian National Army of the 'Free India Army', and the Azad Hind Radio propaganda of the 'Free India

Radio' campaign.

It was because they were meant not to be two separate and independent plans, but the same, single plan of a 'second front', in the Indian national movement. His FIA experiment was, from this angle, a stage-rehearsal of his I.N.A. movement. That it did not mature in Germany, it was revived and executed in East Asia. Had it succeeded in Germany, there might have been either no necessity of the I.N.A. phase, or even if the I.N.A. Wing were to exist side by side the Free India Army Wing, it would have been the East Asiatic Front of the F.I.A. war—they were to be the two identical links in the same chain of a revolutionary project.

NOTES

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4. Statement of S. A. Lal ; *Op. cit.*
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6. Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle*. Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, pp. 429-30.
7. Second I.N.A. Proclamation on entering India, 4. 4. 44.
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20. Speech following the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, 21. 10. 43.
21. Address at the Conference of the Indian Independence League, 21. 10. 43.
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38. Shri Ram Sharma, *Netaji—his life and work*, Shivalal Sharma, Shivalal Agarwala & Co. Ltd., 1948, p. 346.
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CHAPTER II

The I.N.A. and Gandhism

We should now deal with three problems in this connection : (i) relation between the I.N.A. and Gandhism, (ii) the question of novelty of his I.N.A. experiments and (iii) the problem of Fascism vs. Netaji.

There was never any intention in Subhas Chandra, whether conscious or unconscious, to challenge or destroy the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. From the standpoint of ends, there was no difference between the Gandhi movement and the I.N.A. movement—their common goal being the independence of India. And in this respect, the latter was a complement to the former. It is on the question of means that difference lay between them. While Gandhism was based on non-violence and was gradually degenerating into compromise and constitutionalism on that account, the I.N.A. was based on militarism and revolution, as a grim and realistic necessity—a necessity which could not be appreciated by Gandhism. From this angle, the I.N.A. movement was a corrective to the Gandhi movement. But there was no spirit of challenge—rather the revolutionary movement of the I.N.A. was just and simply the other face of the non-violent Gandhi movement, the external phase or aspect of the internal struggle going on at home under the Mahatma. Cohen's view that "the entire I.N.A. affair . . . under the able leadership of Bose, raised a direct challenge to Gandhi,"¹ cannot be accepted.

More, since 1st May, 1942, this gap of difference between them was gradually being reduced. On that date a draft resolution was passed by the Mahatma in which he declared that "Japan's quarrel is not with India, she is warring against the British empire. If India were freed her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan." Again, on 6th

July, 1942, Gandhi passed the famous 'Quit India Resolution', declaring that "Britain's rule must end immediately. In case this 'appeal' went unheeded, the resolution further said, the Congress would then be reluctantly compelled to utilise under the inevitable leadership of Gandhi, all the non-violent strength it has gathered since 1920. There is no doubt that the Congress resolution came in expressing the wish of the vast majority of the Indian people. It also brought the Congress fundamentally near the stand always taken by the writer (Subhas Chandra), namely, that the destruction of the British power in India was the *sine qua non* for the solution of all India's problems, and that the Indian people would have to fight for the achievement of this goal."³ The August Revolution or the 'Quit India Movement' followed logically under the Mahatma.

Thus the above stand of the Mahatma was the stand of a revolution—and "the August Revolution and the 'Chalo Delhi campaign' were the twin facets of a total struggle for liberation."⁴

True, that the form of the revolution as envisaged by Gandhi was a non-violent one in contrast with the revolutionary war of the I.N.A.—still it was a revolution, and Subhas Chandra felt that "the only other alternative plan (to mine) is that of Mahatma Gandhi, embodied in the 'Quit India Resolution'. If that plan succeeds, our plan and our activities will be set at naught. On the contrary, if Mahatma Gandhi's plan fails,—as it has failed—then all hopes of Indian independence rest entirely on the fulfilment of our plan."⁵

Seen in this light, the I.N.A. movement was a logical corollary of, a question of alternative to, the Gandhi movement.

It must be admitted at the same time that, Subhas wrote, "although the resolution passed by the Congress did not entirely bridge the gulf that separated the Congress leadership as a whole from the policy of immediate, uncompromising and all-out fight against the British rule in India advocated by the writer. Expressions in the resolution itself, such as that the Congress has no desire whatever 'to

embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in their prosecution of the war', or 'jeopardise the offensive capacity of the Allied Powers', or that 'the Congress would be agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the allies in India for defensive purposes if India was free; clearly show that the idea of the desirability of an understanding with Britain and the possibility for realising this desired understanding was still in the minds of some Congress leaders.'⁶ The I.N.A. was deadily opposed to any such understanding.

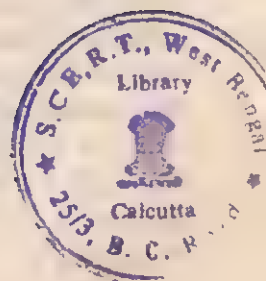
This was the exact nature of difference between the I.N.A. and Gandhism as a political movement. Difference of an approach to politics—non-violent approach *vs.* revolutionary, bias for compromise *vs.* uncompromising stand. But that there was the common tie of their goal of national freedom side by side, this difference was exclusively a friendly difference and not a hostile disagreement. Gandhism and the I.N.A. movement were not thus fundamentally opposed to each other. The question of challenge to the Gandhian leadership on the part of the I.N.A., therefore does not arise.

However, at the same time it will be wrong to argue, as has been done in a bulletin of the Indian Independence League, that Gandhiji conceived the idea of the formation of the I.N.A. This argument is largely based on Gandhi's statement to Robert Bernays, the British traveller on 13.2.31., that to train the Indian army, "... if England refused help we should invite the co-operation of Japan, Germany, France, or any other foreign power."⁷

But the conclusion that we can draw from the above statement, is that Gandhi had an idea of reorganising the Indian army with foreign help, if necessary, within India. It has no relevance to the idea of taking foreign help abroad in a foreign country, against the British, if necessary to achieve India's freedom—an idea that lay behind the formation of the I.N.A. Hence to associate Gandhi with the I.N.A. on the basis of the above argument is unscientific and incorrect.

NOTES

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
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CHAPTER III

The Question of Novelty of his I.N.A. Experiments

The I.N.A., we must point out at the outset, was no creation of Subhas Chandra. It was first conceived by Major Fujihara who advised Mohan Singh that "If you really want freedom of your country you must aspire to do something active. You must raise an Indian National Army."¹

Two influences weighed on Mohan Singh when he heard this proposal, notes Hugh Toye, "the whole subconscious drag of the Indian nationalist mind, and the sudden shattering calamity which had sealed the fate of the British not only in Malaya, but it seemed in all the Far East."²

And by December, 1941, Mohan Singh, with the consent of a committee of prisoners, organised an Indian National Army out of the Indian Independence Volunteer Army from Malaya, and gave it a definite shape by August, 1942. It was revived and reorganised, after its decay, by Rashbihari Bose, after 13th February, 1943.

Again, the administrative wings of the I.N.A.—Indian Independence League and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind were also no innovations. It was Giani Pritam Singh of Bangkok, who had first established an office of what he called the Independence League of India in mid-1941 and in March, 1942, the Indian Independence League was provisionally established, the former one being merged with it, under the Chairmanship of Rashbihari Bose. As to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind of Subhas Chandra, it had its precursor in the 'Provisional Government of India' established in Kabul, in 1915 with German assistance by the Ghadriles or the Indian revolutionaries who settled themselves on the coast of the U.S.A.

Thus so far as the organisational framework was concern-

ed, Subhas Chandra's I.N.A. was no innovation. "Subhas Chandra in setting up the Provisional Government of Azad Hind," observes Lahiri, "took care to maintain in its entirety the political structure built up by Rashbihari."⁸ The novelty of his I.N.A. experiments lay elsewhere, and is to be seen from two perspectives: practical and theoretical. Netaji began afresh. He stepped into the shoes of an old organisational framework, true, but he did not accept it as it was. He merely adopted the skeleton of the structure of the existing I.N.A., the Indian Independence League or the Provisional Government of India, but the concept and character of the whole organisation underwent a radical change under him.

The picture will be clear if we draw a contrast between the pre-Subhasian I.N.A. and Netaji's I.N.A. It cannot be doubted that the founding-fathers of the first I.N.A.—Pritam Singh, Mohan Singh and Rashbihari Bose—had honest and sincere intentions of making it a national army of liberation, but the idea never became a reality because of two factors. Essentially an agency of Japanese military intelligence propaganda that it was, the first I.N.A., whose wings of independent action were clipped by Japanese control, was based as a national or Indian army, upon a foundation of sands. It was more an Indian division of the Japanese army than an Indian army. As such it could hardly play the role of an independent Indian National Army of liberation, even if it wished so.

Besides this factor of its utter subordination to the Japanese control and command, there was another factor accounting for the steady degeneration of the first I.N.A. The virtues that were most urgently needed under the circumstances for the survival of the army—administrative genius or missionary vision or a commanding personality—were unfortunately lacking in all the leaders named above.

As such, it remained, until Netaji's arrival on the scene, as it was on its very inception, an incipient military unit with no definite shape, no organisation, no unity, no discipline, no clear-cut ideas. None of these leaders had the charm or capa-

city to instil into it nationalist spirit and patriotic ardour, or the idea or competence of converting it into an external front of the Indian independence movement. The situation was worse confounded because of personal dissensions between Mohan Singh and Iwakuro and Rashbihari Bose. The rift not only weakened the organisation, but more important, it tarnished the image of the I.N.A. before the Japanese Government, and was slighted by the latter henceforth as an 'unruly crowd of Indians'. But for the arrival of Netaji on the stage, Japan would not have paid, as Miss Lebra points out, much attention to the I.N.A.⁴ It led to a chain of reaction, and made the Japanese and the I.N.A. men alike sceptical about each other, breaking the spirit of co-ordination between them whatever there was. In fact the disbandment of the first I.N.A. was, as Ayer notes it, due to the "... mounting suspicion, distrust, misgivings . . . and lack of faith in Japanese sincerity . . ."⁵

Thus the so-called first Indian National Army was a misnomer—it was neither Indian, nor national, nor an army in its true sense. It was moving within a vicious circle towards its moral death.

It was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose who saved it from the rot. He clearly and immediately after his arrival, saw that "... the I.N.A. as it was then, was not powerful enough to undertake a full-scale invasion of India."⁶ It needed a thorough reshuffle. And it is he who brought order, unity and discipline into this mess of chaos that it was, and welded and organised it into a true army, a national army of the Indians themselves to fight as the second front of India's struggle for freedom at home. "It was Subhas Bose, observes Michael Edwards, "who was to turn . . . the I.N.A. into a genuine revolutionary movement."⁷ Monoharlal also subscribes to this opinion when he comments that, "the idea of creating an army of the Indians for the liberation of India . . . was, in fact his . . . The I.N.A. was a creation of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose."⁸ "The formation of the Provisional Government of Free India", writes Hayashida, "... the

and new functions. The formal body of the Indian Independence League—so long essentially a Japanese intelligence agency was converted into a purely Indian body—administrative and constitutional—which formed the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, was to co-ordinate and control its administrative activities, and conduct the I.N.A. war against the British. The Indian Independence League, being the only representative organ of the Indians in East Asia was competent to form such a government.

Again, the Provisional Government of India, the national and shadowy administrative figure in the pre-Subhasian regime, was thoroughly reorganised, systematised and improved, if not replaced by the Provisional Government of Free India under Subhas Chandra. "It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch and conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence. After the British and their allies are overthrown and until a permanent National Government of Azad Hind is set-up on the Indian soil, the Provisional Government will administer the affairs of the country in trust of the Indian people.

The Provisional Government is entitled, and hereby claims the allegiance of every Indian. It guarantees religious liberty, as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens. It declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all its parts. . . ."¹⁴

Thus the administration of the I.N.A. was changed in its concept and character, and was placed on a new footing—on a national, patriotic and democratic foundation—not as a subterfuge of the Japanese Government, but as a symbol of an independent government of an independent state—for the time being a provisional one, and in the long run the precursor of a permanent one in the future.

Thus the I.N.A. as Subhas Chandra conceived it, stood for, theoretically speaking, nationalism, patriotism, democracy and secularism, distinguished from the pre-Subhasian I.N.A., in the making of which these factors had no part to play.

Thus his whole concept of the I.N.A. was fundamentally and organically different from that of the pre-existent one which was so thoroughly, practically speaking, reshuffled and reinvigorated by him in all its perspectives with radically new ideas and elements that his I.N.A. was virtually a new I.N.A. Herein lay the novelty of his I.N.A. experiments.

NOTES

1. Hugh Toye, *The Springing Tiger*, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, p. 3.
2. *Idem*
3. Amar Lahiri, *Said Subhas Bose*, The Book House, Calcutta, 1947, p. 148.
4. Joyce Lebra, 'Netaji and the Japanese'; paper read at the International Netaji Seminar, 1973, at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta.
5. S. A. Ayer, *The Story of the I.N.A.*, National Book Trust of India, New Delhi, 1972, p. 36.
6. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Netaji and its I.N.A.*, Rajkamal Publications, Delhi, 1946, p. 160.
7. Michael Edwards, *The last years of British India*, Cassel, London & Allied Publishers Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1963, p. 160.
8. Monoharlal, *Netaji and his I.N.A.*, Indian Export and World Trade, New Delhi, 1967, Introduction.
9. Tatsuo Hayashida, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose—his struggle and martyrdom*, trans. Viswanath Chatterjee, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1970, p. 65.
10. Broadcast from Tokyo, 4. 4. 43.
11. Special order of the Day from Netaji during the withdrawal from Imphal on 14. 8. 44.
12. Hugh Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
13. Compliment from the Japanese press, Tatsuo Hayashida, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose—his struggle and martyrdom*, trans. Biswanath Chatterjee, Allied Publishers, Bombay 1970, p. 96.
14. Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, 21. 10. 43.

CHAPTER IV

Was Netaji a Fascist ?

The most controversial question in connection with his I.N.A. ideology is the question of Fascism—the problem whether Subhas Chandra was a Fascist or not. There are different views on the matter, which we may arrange into two schools of thought—one branding him as a Fascist and another holding the opposite opinion. And the subject of the controversy may be classified under three theories namely :

- (1) Theory of collaboration.
- (2) Theory of dictatorship.
- (3) Theory of militarism.

THEORY OF COLLABORATION

The argument of the first school of opinion holding Subhas Chandra to be a Fascist, consists of three factors.

In the first place, they point out that Subhas Chandra had a personal and profound regard for Hitler and Mussolini. And to corroborate their view they refer to some observations made by Subhas Chandra himself. Thus they refer to his statement after Gandhi's failure at the Round-table Conference, that "if. . . the Mahatma had spoken in the language of Dictator Stalin or Duce Mussolini or Fuhrer Hitler—John Bull would have understood and would have bowed his head in respect."¹ The critics also point out Subhas Chandra's reference to Mussolini as one of the men 'who counts in European politics'. This personal regard for the Fascist leaders, according to this school of opinion implied his ideological bias for Fascism. Alfred Tyrneur stresses on the point more specifically. According to him, Subhas Chandra, while in Germany, had gradually developed a pro-Nazi bias,

particularly since 1934 : "Bose gradually withdrew from his liberal, democratic and socialistic friends and was seen more and more in company of Nazi sympathisers. He made frequent trip to Germany and received mysterious visitors from the Reich. . . ."²

The second point in the argument of this school of critics was Subhas Chandra's association with the Axis Powers whose help was indispensably necessary for him for the fulfilment of the mission of his journey abroad. It was, Comrade Vera points out, "the Nazis" who arranged the escape of the Indian Fascist leader Subhas Chandra Bose to Berlin"³ It was again only with the German help that he could raise the Indian Legion in Germany and he owed deep gratitude to Hitler on this account. "I am profoundly grateful to the German Government," he wrote, "and to Your Excellency in particular for the hospitality, assistance and kind consideration that I received during my stay in Germany. This has served to forge the ties that will bind us together for all time."⁴

Because of this inextricable link with Germany, these critics point out, the character of the independence movement as conducted under Subhas Chandra in Germany was fundamentally more German than Indian, and the text of the oath that had to be taken by the Indian soldiers of the Legion as well as the German soldiers was a pointer to this direction, "I swear by God this holy oath that I will obey the leader of the German state and people, Adolf Hitler, as commander of the German armed forces, in the fight for the freedom of India, in which fight the leader is Subhas Chandra Bose"⁵

From this point of view of the critics the Free India Army raised by Subhas Chandra was in reality an Indian wing of the German army in the German war against the British, rather than an Indian army in an Indian war against them. Hence his plan of revolution in Germany, from this viewpoint, ultimately aided and abetted the German activities. Thus he became, 'a helpless tool' at the hands of the latter, a "pro-Nazi Mr. Subhas Bose",⁶ "an ally of the

German Fascists",⁷ as Akimov puts it, or a German collaborator. Akimov's view is shared by Christopher Sykes.⁸ And the British harped on the same theme when they warned the Indians that the plan of Indo-German invasion of India as envisaged by Subhas Chandra was "... not ... one intended to liberate the Indian people, but to substitute British rule by German rule."⁹

Simultaneously with his contact with Germany, Subhas Chandra established a contact with Italy. He made frequent trips to Italy and met Mussolini who received him cordially. "Mussolini allowed himself to be persuaded by arguments produced by Bose to obtain a Tripartite declaration in favour of Indian independence. He has telegraphed the Germans proposing contrary to the Salzburg decision—proceeding at once with the declaration."¹⁰ And "to back his (Subhas Chandra's) new proposal Mussolini told the Germans that he had urged Bose to set up a counter-government to appear more conspicuously."¹¹

Thus Subhas Chandra, according to his critics was not only maintaining close intimacy with Mussolini but also was acting in accordance with his dictates, to fulfil his plan of revolution in Germany. "We can integrate our independence movement into the Japanese-German-Italian united front against the common enemy,"¹² he said.

While in Japan, the critics point out, his intimacy with the Japanese was closer. He was received by Tojo most enthusiastically and was encouraged and promised sincere help by the latter to his revolutionary programme, and it was largely with the Japanese help that Subhas Chandra was able to raise his I.N.A. and form the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. And to mark the culmination of this process of mutual co-operation and co-ordination between the Japanese and the Indian revolutionaries in Japan, Tojo established the Greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere. "Your Excellency," said Subhas Chandra, "in setting out to create a new order based on the sublime principles of justice, reciprocity, mutual aid and assistance, you are undertaking

a task which is the noblest that the human mind can conceive."¹³ Subhas Chandra recognised Japan as India's greatest friend.

Thus the "Azad Hind movement was not only an accomplishment of the Indians residing in East Asia," writes Lahiri, "but also of Japan,"¹⁴ inasmuch as "he could not reinvigorate the movement," Lahiri continues, "in the absence of fresh assistance of a positive nature from Japan."¹⁵

Thus Indian independence movement in Japan under Subhas Chandra, from this point of view, had no independent origin—it was more Japanese than Indian in character and "(he) could claim to be the champion of Indian independence in accordance with the tenets of co-prosperity sphere, but (he) works for Japan."¹⁶ His plan—one of expelling the British with the help of Japan—was a suicidal plan. Inasmuch as, according to these critics; the Japanese would have taken the place of the British if the latter could be expelled by the Indo-Japanese forces, burying the question of Indian independence and thus setting at naught the prolonged national struggle of the Indians at home and abroad. "Despite Chandra Bose's personal sincerity, Indian freedom could well have been a state of Shintoism if he had marched with Mutaguchi into Delhi",¹⁷ observes Barker. It was held by the critics further that "the Japanese agreed to help this army with the objective of creating a favourable background for a good reception of the Japanese in India and with the object of receiving . . . help from this army in invading India."¹⁸

From this point of view of the critics, Subhas Chandra had sacrificed his independence of action to the Japanese and had become a Japanese stooge, a collaborator, or a running dog of the Japanese Fascists,¹⁹ and his I.N.A. a puppet army in their hands, "henchmen of Japanese Imperialism . . . traitors and Quislings. . . traitor to India's freedom",²⁰ "messengers not of freedom but of slavery, fifth columnists. . . ."²¹

Thus Subhas Chandra, according to this school of thinking, sold himself to the Tripartite Powers in lieu of

their assistance or even promise of it, to his revolutionary programme, and was also helplessly destined to sell, in spite of him, his country's freedom. He was, therefore, an Axis-collaborator, "the arch traitor of India",²² "... a Fascist rogue, an Indo-Fascist adventurer".²³ "To think only of his motives," writes Joshi, "and forget the pro-Fascist policy that he pursued is to lose confidence and respect in the democratic elements abroad for the Indian freedom movement".²⁴

In the third place, the critics point out that the character of the Provisional Government, established by, Subhas Chandra, was Fascistic. And this was partly due to, according to them, his bias for Fascism, and partly to the impact of his association with the Fascist Powers. Thus Shivram informs us that someone who claimed to know Netaji furnished the following analogy :

Indian Independence League	= Party.
Provisional Government of Azad Hind	= Administration.
Their relationship	= The relation between the National Socialist Party and the Government of Hitler. ²⁵

Walter Leifer and Alfred Tyrneur subscribe to the same view. While the latter described Subhas Chandra as 'India's would be Fuhrer',²⁶ according to Leifer the Free India State as envisaged by Subhash Chandra, would be a "mighty military state with a well-developed Fuhrer cult."²⁷ This, according to the critics, presented him as a Fascist, at least a pro-Fascist.

It is in the above light of discussion that the first school of thought described Subhas Chandra as a Fascist.

As against this school there is another school of opinion which repudiates the former's contention and hold that Subhas Chandra was by no means a Fascist. According to them Subhas Chandra had no ideological bias for Fascism, or Nazism. "Bose was never an admirer of Nazi ideology," writes Voigt, "Bose distinguished between the moral and

mechanical or strategic features of Nazi policy. From the point of view of strategy, he was full of admiration, from the moral point of view full of contempt."²⁸ This contention was supported by B. K. Sen Gupta, when he argued that, "he was impressed only by a particular aspect (discipline) of . . . Fascism and for the cult as a whole he could not have anything but detestation."²⁹

Thus as a practical weapon Subhas Chandra recognised the merit of Nazism or Fascism, but as an ideology he had strong hatred for it. "I was glad to note," observes Kitty Kurty, "his deep contempt for the Nazis . . ."³⁰

"The Nazi way of political problems," comments Girija Mukherjee, his close associate and colleague in Germany, "was not his own and although he prided himself in being a political realist, he found the Nazi method of political control extremely disagreeable."³¹ ". . . he did not want," Mukherjee continues, "to be branded as a pro-Nazi."³² ". . . that he was a Fascist or Nazi never came to our mind,"³³ Mukherjee states further.

Thus Subhas Chandra's anti-Nazi sentiment was quite pronounced. That is why "the Nazi party viewed Bose with mixed emotion as did he view the Nazi party,"³⁴ points out Wiresing.

Indeed, "he (Subhas Chandra) emphasised total opposition to Fascism"³⁵ as early as 1938, and in 1939 expressed the same view "I am opposed to Hitlerism, . . ."³⁶

"The essence of this doctrine (Fascism) is that Germany should give up the idea of being a naval or colonial power." He wrote, "She should remain a continental power and her expansion should take place on the continent—towards the East The new social philosophy of the Nazis as expounded by Hitler advocated the purification and strengthening of the German race through the elimination of Jewish influence and a return to the soil."³⁷

Fascism was thus, as Subhas Chandra saw it, a symbol of racialism, to which he was opposed. "The new nationalism

of Germany is not only narrow and selfish," he wrote, "but . . . is inspired by racial arrogance,"³⁹ and in 1933 he told Alfred Turnauer that "no self-respecting Asiatic would ever bow to the arrogance of the Nazi race theory."⁴⁰ Fascism was also conterminous with imperialism to him. Fascist Dictators and their imperialist kiths,"⁴⁰ as he put it. The essence of Fascism being imperialism in his eyes, the Axis partners were held by him to be ". . . avowedly imperialist in aim . . ." ⁴¹ Hence "the Japanese are in my opinion the British of the East."⁴² He even thought of "a free India . . . to frustrate the designs of Japan and Italy in the East (so that) the present surge of fascist aggression may receive a rude set-back."⁴³ It is in this light that he supported the cause of China against the Japanese imperialist aggression on her—"our whole heart goes to China in her hour of trial."⁴⁴ "Subhas Chandra had no faith in the extreme tenets of Fascism," observes Varma, "He never sanctioned the imperialistic expansion . . ."⁴⁵ Not only that Fascism was Imperialism to him, but it was also the other way round—Imperialism was Fascism in his estimate. "Britishers and the British government have been talking of upholding the sacred principles of freedom and democracy, but their policy nearer home belies these professions. They want our assistance to destroy Nazism but they have been indulging in super-Nazism."⁴⁶ Thus Subhas Chandra was as deadly an anti-Imperialist as an anti-Fascist. Fascism was also equated by him with irrationalism and barbarism for its over-emphasis on violence. "The doctrine of Nazism," thus he wrote, "is abhorred by the rational world and it has forfeited all claim to humanism by its insistence on the glorification of violence and war. Nazism cannot guarantee peace to men nor would it let life bloom in its beauty."⁴⁷

He protested against the savagery of racism: "The black wings of the Nazi hawk are spread over England . . . its startling success is regarded as a triumph of barbarity over reason."⁴⁸

Again, Subhas Chandra was a firm exponent of socialism and held that ". . . socialism is the only alternative to

Hitlerism".⁴⁹ His was no conventional concept of socialism. His concept of socialism denoted a synthesis of the ideals of democracy and socialism, by way of assimilation of different systems of knowledge and experience, whether in the East or in the West, and their adaptation to the basic requirements and tradition of the Indian society—a perfect balance between values material and spiritual. This conservative and spiritual concept of socialism, a revolt against excessive materialism—the basis of Fascism or imperialism, was naturally an antithesis of Fascism. It clearly bore out that "he did not subscribe," as Kamath puts it, "to the political ideal of Hitler, i.e., Fascism."⁵⁰ "To associate such "man," writes Jog, "with the crudities, vulgarities and cruelties of Fascism is to do violence to common sense".⁵¹ His close association with Trot, Jog further points out, strongly anti-Hitler and executed for his plot to destroy Hitler, confirms his anti-Hitlerite bias, although this association was an accidental factor, as Frank points out and no sign of a pre-meditated design.⁵²

The above discussion disproves the contention of the first school of thought that Subhas Chandra had an ideological bias for Fascism, "that he constantly and consciously borrowed from Nazi ideology".⁵³ He was strongly opposed to Fascism, Nazism, or Hitlerism, whatever you call it. That he did not openly denounce the Nazis or the Fascists was, as Girija Mukherjee saw it,⁵⁴ due to two factors. He was too absorbed in his own matters to devote attention to Europe or Germany. And as a matter of tactics he did not want any open hitch with them at a time when he was in dire need of their active assistance for his revolutionary programme.

With regard to the factor of his association with the Axis Powers, we must point out that there were four factors which determined his attitude towards the latter—the British policy towards India, the Congress policy towards the British, the Indian situation and the international situation. According to him, the British rule in India was characterised by two things—the determined bid of the British to preserve their power in India matched by their reluctance to concede even dominion

status, and their military supremacy in the light of which non-violent agitation had no appeal to them. Hence to expel the mighty British from India, he was convinced, an armed revolution was the only way out. He would have been the happiest man on earth if it could be organised and conducted within the country without any foreign aid. "Had it been possible to organise a modern army inside India," he said, "and procure arms for that army inside the country no help from outside would have been necessary".⁵⁵

But the Congress policy of non-violence precluded any such possibility, and the Indian people were not prepared, India was not ripe, either politically or militarily or even morally, for such a revolution. As such the only alternative left was to organise a national revolutionary army abroad to conduct the revolution against the British.

And against the backdrop of the international situation, when a war was going on between England backed by her allies and the Axis Powers, it was most expedient to organise such an army in an enemy-country of Great Britain. For he believed that Britain's enemies are India's natural allies for whom it was the "most natural thing . . . to support India's demand for liberty,"⁵⁶ in their own interest of promoting anti-British propaganda.

Under the circumstances, "it is the Axis Powers alone," he observed, "that can render practical help (to the Indians) in their struggle for emancipation from the British domination. Hence his approach to Germany and Italy for such assistance, hence "he would ask for the understanding and co-operation of the political world of Japan in connection with the movement of liberation of India."⁵⁷ His personal contact with the leaders of the Axis countries convinced him of their sympathetic attitude towards the Indian cause. "My personal experience as well as my interviews with Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini have convinced me that in this struggle against British imperialism Tripartite Powers are our best friends and allies outside India."⁵⁸ Particularly, he hailed the declaration made by Tojo in the Japanese Diet that "Japan is firmly

resolved to extend all means in order to help expel and eliminate the Anglo-Saxon influence which are the enemy of the Indian people, and enable India to achieve full independence in the true sense of the term."

Japan, he said, was India's greatest friend : "this was an epoch-making declaration which would live in history."⁵⁹

Thus among the Axis Powers Japan's response was most favourable. In fact, as Miss Lebra points out, "the logic of geography in South-East Asia and the common enemy, Britain, made some form of co-operation between Japan and the Indian independence movement natural."⁶⁰

Thus Netaji's impression out of his study of the international situation and his reading of the Tripartite Powers, was decisive. "It is absolutely ridiculous," he said, "to say that a combination of the Axis Powers constitutes a menace to the freedom of India. . . . they have great sympathy to the cause of India's freedom."⁶¹ And pre-supposing that "the victory of the Nippon and the Axis Powers is assured," he held, "the defeat of the Anglo-Americans is a certainty."⁶² "It is because of these considerations that "the right course struck to me," he said, "to be to fight with the enemies of Britain and contribute our share to the destruction of the British Empire."⁶³ The I.N.A. war was, in this light, a joint struggle with the Axis Bloc against Britain--a link in the chain of their total war against the latter : "a common struggle against a common enemy on a common strategy."⁶⁴

Thus Netaji's association with the Tripartite Powers was not a product of any pre-conceived pro-Fascist bias on his part, it was a matter of indispensable necessity, a question of expediency, strategy or a wise policy. As K. K. Ghosh puts it, "his efforts to secure the aid of the Axis Powers for Indian independence was a part of his tactics. As such it did not mean the acceptance of Fascism as a political ideology."⁶⁵ Indeed, here Japan or Germany did not matter, what mattered to him was a military Power to help India against the British in getting her freedom. "I am not

ashamed of taking help of the Nippon. Today, we are taking the help from Japan, tomorrow we shall not hesitate to take help from any other power . . . if that be desirable in the interest of India.”⁶⁶ Hence his idea was also to go to Russia for the fulfilment of his plan, and according to Alfred Tyrneur,⁶⁷ and D. K. Roy,⁶⁸ this was his original plan. That it did not materialise, he went to Germany. When Germany failed to satisfy him on the point, he left for Japan. This was not opportunism, but pragmatism solely guided by patriotism. Particularly if imperialism could ally itself with Communism, he argued, why not a slave country accept aid from wherever it came, for utilitarian purpose? His attitude in this respect was entirely moulded by practical considerations and not by any emotional bias towards Fascism. “. . . for practical reasons,” as Kitty Kurty observes, “he might go along with the communists, as he was now doing with the Fascists.”⁶⁹ “Bose . . . did not act out of opportunism . . . he viewed the Nazi ideology sceptically and was no stooge of Hitler or Mussolini. Bose believed in functioning in accordance with political realism,” observes Schnabel.⁷⁰

The central theme of his association with the Axis Bloc was the freedom of India, as is clear from above. It was his burning love for his country that led him to ally himself with the Axis Powers. As our *ex*-Prime Minister Sri Lalbahadur Shastri said, that national revolution and his country's freedom were the sole objectives behind his hazardous journey abroad.⁷¹ And it was this question of freedom of India that was of topmost importance in his mind abroad, that guided all his activities there. “I am not an apologist of the Tripartite Powers,” he said from Berlin on 16.5.43, “my concern is with India and India alone.” “All my life,” he further states, “I have been a servant of India and in the future years of my life I shall remain so. My allegiance and loyalty has ever been and will be to India and India alone . . . whatever I have done since leaving home has been and will be done with the sole purpose of bringing about the speedy emancipation of my country.”⁷²

This was his patriotism which provided the national and independent basis of all his activities abroad. His critics failed to see this aspect of the problem—the aspect of his *bona fide* patriotism in its true perspective, countering any tendency on his part to submit to the Axis Powers on any question if that went against Indian interest. Some scholars, however, did not miss the point. Thus K. P. Chaudhury points out, “Subhas Chandra joined hands with the Axis Powers with one objective in view : free India with the help of Britain’s enemies.”⁷³ Chaudhury is supported by Voigt according to whom, “his (Netaji’s) joining hands with Hitler was not an expression of his support of the Nazi ideology It was nothing but (an) attempt to rally German support to gain independence for India”.⁷⁴ “He has put all his eggs in this one basket—Azadi,”⁷⁵ observes a fellow-worker of Netaji.

Side by side this factor of patriotism, and as a complement to it, we should note two other factors : freedom of action, asserted and enjoyed by Netaji during his association with the Tripartite powers, and the independent character of the movement under his leadership in the Axis countries.

While in Germany, Netaji firmly maintained his freedom of action and independent stand, and warned his Nazi partners that he was prepared to return to India than accept their dictating terms. The independent character of his revolutionary project in Germany has been attested by Alexander Werth, Seifreiz, and Lever Kuehn. Thus Werth says that “the work done by the Indians in Germany was on the firm understanding that without being ideologically involved in the National Socialist doctrine the Indians in Germany could advance the cause of Indian independence.”⁷⁶

According to Seifreiz “. . . no interference was to be made with Bose’s plans and efforts directed towards India’s independence,”⁷⁷ while Lever Kuehn points out that “he (Netaji) was prepared to do nothing simply for Germany’s sake and everything including the harnessing of Germany’s

interests for India.”⁷⁸ The same spirit of freedom was maintained by him during his contact with Mussolini, and his activities in Italy. “As a free man,” he told Mussolini, “I will continue to fight the present and the future exploiters of my country and as a free man I will die in the battle-field.”⁷⁹ It is in the same spirit of independence that he extended and conducted the freedom struggle in different parts of Europe. His free India Army and free India Government symbolised this spirit of freedom.

Thus the character of Netaji’s revolutionary movement in Europe was not German as the critics say, but purely Indian, based on an Indian Army and an Indian Government.

Apropos of his association with Japan, even when he was fighting and working side by side with the latter, he was determined to preserve the national and independent character of the I.N.A. movement on the basis of his freedom of action. The I.N.A. as he recreated it was an Indian army, the I.N.A. Government an Indian Government and the whole I.N.A. plan, “(was). . . implemented on his own initiative. . . without any Japanese prodding.”⁸⁰ And he clung steadfastly to preserve this Indian and independent character of the movement. He was ever stern and vigilant to detect and thwart any Japanese move to establish their control and supremacy over the I.N.A. or even interfere into his plans or activities. He told Shigemitsu that unless he received satisfaction he would withdraw from the leadership of the I.N.A. Government. “Bose had accepted the earlier I.N.A. obligations to provide battle and strategic intelligence for the Japanese, but he intended to exercise personal control,”⁸¹ observes Hugh Toye, who further testifies to his absolute lack of fear of the Japanese, to his brave independence of the Japanese and to his “readiness to quarrel with them over the slightest infringement of his rights.”⁸²

“Netaji took his stand,” writes Ayer, “four-square on certain fundamentals and refused to budge an inch even when such a stand meant an imminent and total break with the Japanese and an end to all his dreams of free India.”⁸³

Frankly speaking, "the Japanese did not count on Netaji taking such a purely nationalist attitude regarding Indian independence. They were thwarted at each turn by Netaji as soon as he suspected the least move to turn us into puppets," observes a fellow-worker of Netaji.⁸⁴

The character of the I.N.A. movement, it is clear from above, was not Japanese as the critics say, but purely and entirely Indian.

In the light of the above discussion it is conclusively proved that Netaji was not and could not be an Axis collaborator, a Japanese stooge, and his I.N.A. could not be a puppet army. He never allowed his Axis partners to utilise the Indian movement for their own interests. His burning patriotism, the independence of action asserted by him, the independence of the movement led by him, his character, his personality, his ideology—everything pointed against the least possibility of selling or mortgaging his country's freedom or interest by him as the tool of a foreign power. "Netaji was not the person," observes Shah Nawaz Khan, "who would ever bow down before anyone or sell the honour of his country for any price."⁸⁵ "The man who refused to have India's freedom except on his own terms," to quote Ayer, "that man might have been anything else but certainly no tool in anybody's hands. Nothing was dearer to him . . . than India's independence, but he was prepared to do without it, if the price asked for was a compromise on any principle."⁸⁶ "Bose was no tool or stooge of the Fascist or the Axis," writes Jog, "nor their propagandist. They less used him than he used them for his country's liberation without sacrificing his independence in the face of their opposition sometimes."⁸⁷

Patriot Subhas Chandra knew, Statesman Subhas Chandra knew that the liberation of his country secured through fighting as an Axis stooge was to be no real freedom, no freedom at all, "To call such a political thinker a Fascist is to put a heavy discount on patriotism and practical political wisdom," observes Jitendranath Ghosh.⁸⁸

"Bose was never a collaborator in the evil sense of the

term," writes Lever Kuehn, "which the word has acquired in the recent years."⁸⁰ Dr. Weidmann subscribes to this view, "... attempts have been made in the past to make out that Subhas Bose was a collaborator of the Axis Bloc. But it must have been proved by now that such statements could only be based on misinterpretation of facts and concocted stories. . . . Bose's love for his motherland did not permit him to compromise on the issue of independence."⁸⁰ Even Jawaharlal Nehru admitted it that, "... Subhas Bose and his followers were motivated by the desire to free India and were in no way mere the tools of the Japanese, and his I.N.A. not a puppet army."⁸¹ The I.N.A. court-martial also pointed to similar conclusion. It steered the I.N.A. clear of any Fascist ideology or Japanese stooge fiction, as K. K. Ghosh notes it, and proving it to be formed only to fight for the liberation of India.⁸²

The view of the critics that his I.N.A. plan was a suicidal one in being likely to establish Japanese control and hegemony over India, is completely untenable. The problem is to be examined from two sides Japanese side and Indian side.

Japan had no plan of invasion of India. Fred Saito and Tatsuo Hayashida in their paper in the recently published international biography of Netaji,⁸³ and S. A. Ayer in his recently published 'Story of the I.N.A.', have substantiated this argument through laborious research, and Joyce Lebra in her recent publication 'Jungle Alliance', subscribes to this contention. "Japan had at no time planned a major invasion of India," she writes, "or incorporation of India into the Greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere militarily. . . . Japan's aim in aiding the I.A.N remained to foster anti-British sentiment. . . ."⁸⁴

We may refer in this context to the declaration of Tojo in the Japanese Diet on 16.6.43; "Japan had no demands to make on her (India)," he said, "beyond the necessities of war and intended her to be independent. Any action the Indians would take themselves would be helped and appreciated by Japan . . . in their interests." Netaji hailed the declaration,

and it is true, believed in the sincerity of Japan, but at the same time he was stern and vigilant in preventing any possibility of Japanese ascendancy over the Indians. Thus during the Imphal campaign he gave instructions to his soldiers—"If you find the Japanese trying to establish any type of control over India . . . fight them as vigorously as you fight the British." He made it amply clear to the Japanese that he would have another two centuries of India's slavery, Ayer points out, than have the Japanese as masters in place of the British.⁹⁵ For "according to his ideology the greatest sin was the subjugation of India by a foreign power . . .,"⁹⁶ whether England or Japan. "We stand always for independence," he declared, "and we shall never permit vital encroachment on our national sovereignty by any foreign power."⁹⁷ He would not even allow the Japanese to hold the post of Chairman of the Indo-Japanese War Council, and rejected such a proposal from the Jap, as derogatory to the dignity, integrity and sovereignty of Free India. Moreover, "he contended rightly that," as Ba Maw notes it, "a Japanese invasion of India would create very divided feelings among the Indians and might even swing a large mass of them to the side of the British."⁹⁸

Again, not only Japan, he would permit none of the Axis Powers to interfere into the internal affairs of India. ". . . the internal politics of Germany or Italy or Japan do not concern us . . . their aim in the international sphere, is the destruction of the British empire which is India's one and only enemy . . . while standing for full co-operation with the Tripartite Powers in the external sphere, I stand for absolute self-determination for India where her own national affairs are concerned and I shall never tolerate any interference in the internal affairs of Free India . . . no one should make the mistake of concluding that external collaboration with the Tripartite Powers means the acceptance of their domination or even their ideology in our internal affairs."⁹⁹

Thus it will be wrong to argue that Netaji's activities would minister to Japanese designs, or that India's interests were subordinated to theirs, or that the I.N.A. war would

have planted the Japanese flag in India, in the case of Axis Victory. The I.N.A. war was not Japan's war, it was India's own war. "It is not Japan that we are helping," as he said, "by waging war on . . . England. We are helping ourselves."¹⁰⁰ That it was really an Indian war was proved by the fact that even after the collapse of Japan, Netaji "urged that the I.N.A. should continue to confront the Allies until," as Fujiwara pointed out, "their aim was achieved."¹⁰¹

In fact, Netaji's concept of the I.N.A. war was out and out an Indian war, a war of the Indians, by the Indians for the freedom of India. "Emancipation of India," he said, "must be the work primarily of the Indians themselves,"¹⁰² It should be achieved through Indian blood, Indian sacrifice, and by no means through Japanese sacrifice. "Any liberation of India, through Japanese sacrifice," as he held, "is to me worse than slavery."¹⁰³

Thus Netaji had to fight hard for preserving the independent and national character of the I.N.A. war, and from this point of view, his fight on the I.N.A. field was a fight on two fronts—the British front and the Japanese front.

In the light of the above discussion, any question of Japanese occupation of India, in the event of her liberation from the British, should be outright ruled out.

As to the third argument of the first school of critics that the provisional Government of Azad Hind was Hitlerite in character with Subhas Chandra as its prospective Fuehrer, is also untenable. That the character of the I.N.A. Government was, as we have seen in the first part of this chapter, nationalistic, patriotic and democratic, it could not, both theoretically and practically, have any fascistic overtone. The Provisional Government, was, as Subhas Chandra saw it, short-lived in nature, and "once our enemies are expelled," he said, "from India and peace and order are established, the mission of the Provisional Government will be over. It will be for the Indian people themselves to determine the form of government that they choose and also to decide as to who should take charge of that government."¹⁰⁴

This cherished faith in popular will and popular sovereignty was an antithesis to Fascism. The Indian Independence League was also, as we have noted above, a representative of the people. Nay, under Netaji the power of supervision over the I.N.A. and overall administrative responsibility lay in the Provisional Government, and not in the League. Hence the analogy drawn by his critics between his I.N.A. Government and a Fascist Government, where the party, which is equated by the critics with the League, is supreme in all matters, does not stand.

Thus the whole administrative network of the I.N.A. was popular in character, and Subhas Chandra as its head was the representative of the people and a servant of the people. How this man could be branded as a "Fuehrer" simply passes one's comprehension.

Thus all the arguments of the first school of critics are absolutely unfounded, and posed in a highly irregular way. "A sentence from there and an utterance from here are put together to hold him up as a Fascist," Jitendranath Ghosh points out. "... These are merely tavern-notion of politics gaining ground only due to interested propaganda."¹⁰⁶ Particularly, the allegations of the Communists, with whom he was at loggerheads, and the British of whom he was the sworn enemy, should be summarily dismissed as biased, prejudiced, motivated and vindictive. Thus K. M. Munshi points out that there was a British conspiracy to dub him as a German secret agent to poison the mind of Gandhi, with the help of intercepted coded message from the German consulate.¹⁰⁶ "During the war," as Jog sees it, was the fashion to damn one's opponents as a Fascist or Quisling, "but from a balanced, level-headed viewpoint, whatever he was Bose was never a Fascist."¹⁰⁷

Thus in the light of the above discussion it is clear that Subhas Chandra as to the first theory of the controversy—the theory of collaboration—was by no means a Fascist.

In fact, there has been recently an attempt at reassessment of Netaji in this light in the East and the West. Even

in America, as Dr. Ranjan Borra points out, where to an average American, he was until the fifties more a stereotype of a collaborator than a patriot or a freedom fighter—since the late fifties, or sixties a rational and realistic approach to the study of his activities abroad has been developing.¹⁰⁸

The second theory is the theory of dictatorship. There are two schools of thought in this respect, one describing him as a dictator, a 'Fascist Dictator'¹⁰⁹ while the other is opposed to this view.

According to the former school, Subhas Chandra had an inherent dictatorial leaning, 'an . . . authoritarian inclination'. According to Hugh Toye the Forward Bloc ". . . was organised on Bose's own . . . authoritarian bias,"¹¹⁰ and so far his I.N.A. Government was concerned it had been simply converted into a dictatorship. The I.N.A. cabinet was subordinated to it. It had no responsibility and could only tender advice.¹¹¹ "Under Axis patronage," Toye observes, "he behaved more and more like a dictator. The arch-rebel tolerated no rebellion against himself, no criticism, no failure to co-operate in the way he had chosen . . ."¹¹²

Subhas Chandra, these critics hold, envisaged for Free India an authoritarian form of Government, a dictatorship. "Bose . . . pointed to a new way for India, a middle way," writes Hugh Toye, "This lay not between democracy and dictatorship, but between Communism and Fascism, two different forms of dictatorship. Bose had been stirred by what he had seen in Rome and Istanbul—a strong party organisation in the one, Mustafa Kamal's swift modernisation of a backward oriental state in the other. India was in need of a material and social reconstruction on the same scale and must be governed by a dictator."¹¹³ "May be he was not a Fascist," observes another critic, "but he certainly was inclined towards dictatorship and would have established one in India given a half-chance."

According to Shivram, Subhas planned a Fascist-Communist dictatorship for India, while, according to Gwynne, Subhas Chandra believed in a dictatorship, ruthlessly suppressing dissenting minorities.¹¹⁴

It is interesting to note in this connection, before we go to answer these critics that Subhas Chandra himself openly expressed in some of his speeches or writings, an inclination towards dictatorship or authoritarianism. Thus in a message from Germany on 4.7.44, he said, "I have no objection personally to dictatorship if it is for a righteous cause." He believed in a strong centralised party with dictatorial powers, both before and after freedom-party "... to play the role of the fighters and leaders in the national campaign against Great Britain and also the role of architect of new India, who will be called upon to undertake the work of post-war social reconstruction."¹¹⁵ "Just as Ghazi Mustafa Kamal Pasha," he further states, "and his party won freedom for Turkey and thereafter remained in power in order to put Turkey on her feet and put into practice their programme of national reconstruction, so also must we do in India. 'Dictatorship of the party both before and after swaraj is won',—that must be our slogan for the future."¹¹⁶

The same theme was harped by him in an article—"For a few years after the end of the British rule in India, there must be a dictatorship And it is to India's good that she should be ruled by a dictator to begin with. None but a dictator can wipe out such a dissension India suffers from so many ills that only a ruthless dictator can cure her India needs a Kamal Pasha."¹¹⁷ Again, in his address to the students of the Imperial University at Tokyo, in November, 1944, he discussed about the problems of future India and suggested that, in order to have an economic structure of a socialistic nature, we must have a state of an authoritarian character. Nay, he further commented, keeping before his mind the picture of future India, that the next phase in world history would produce a synthesis between Communism and Fascism, and most probably in India.¹¹⁸

The last statement provided the basis of the contentions of Hugh Toye, Shivram and also of the British Government's report that Subhas Chandra followed a golden mean between

Communism and Fascism.

From the above discussion two points distinctly emerge :

- (1) How far the views of Subhas Chandra found above, revealed him as really a dictator, having an inherent authoritarian or dictatorial bias.
- (2) Whether the Forward Bloc and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind were authoritarian or dictatorial in character.

It is true that Subhas Chandra envisaged the necessity of an authoritarian state or a dictatorship in Free India, for the effective tackling and solution of the problems of the new state, but two things are to be noted in this connection.

Dictatorship or an iron hand, he saw, the only way—an indispensable one—to face the challenge of multifarious and complex problems that threaten the new state of Free India and which could not be solved by any other milder means. Moreover, this dictatorship, according to his concept of political thought, was to be a temporary phase—to give way voluntarily to a form of democracy as soon as order and stability were established in Free India. The dictatorship or the authoritarian form of government that he vouched for, was thus synonymous with “a strong central government with dictatorial powers for some years to come,” as he himself writes, “in order to put India on her feet.”¹¹⁹

His ideal of ‘Dictatorship of the Party’, really stood for a strong centralized party or state bound together by military discipline to conduct a militant and ruthless struggle against the British before freedom and for one, after freedom, invested with “. . . full powers to put through new reform,”¹²⁰ “. . . as the only means of holding India together and preventing a chaos when the Indians are free and are thrown entirely on their own resources.”¹²¹

The same thing he emphasised in his presidential speech at the Haripura Congress in February, 1938 : “. . . the party must take over power, assume responsibility of administration and put through its programme of reconstruction.”

Moreover, this authoritarian state "...will work as the organ or as the servant of the masses," he declared.¹²²

Thus his concept of dictatorship was an unconventional one—a means to an end—a stop-gap arrangement in the evolution of democracy and socialism in future India. His plan of military revolution made the period of military dictatorship inevitable as a normal life but for some time only. It is in this light that he thought of supporting the cause of dictatorship. "Bose saw a strong central Government settling down to the accomplishment of a great social and industrial revolution in India and then handing over after perhaps twenty years to the processes of democracy."¹²³

By his reference to the synthesis between Fascism and Communism, noted above, what he really meant was, as he explained it himself to R. P. Dutta, a synthesis between democracy and Socialism—progress of Free India towards Socialism. Merely, the expression he used in this context was not a happy one, he later confessed.¹²⁴ "Subhas Chandra was not a Fascist because of his authoritarian leaning," observes B. K. Sen Gupta, "or belief in party dictatorship. In that he was more a socialist than a Fascist—as the dictatorship was temporarily needed for post-freedom reconstruction."¹²⁵ "There is no doubt that the introduction of an authoritarian government and a socialist economy," writes K. K. Ghosh, "was considered by Bose to be favourable for the quick progress of the country."¹²⁶

Thus Subhas Chandra never thought of Future India in terms of Fascism, or in terms of Communism—another form of dictatorship—as we have noted it in Part I. The only prescription made by him was Socialism. And his ideal of Socialism as examined in Part I, cannot be equated with a synthesis between Communism and Fascism as is contended by Toye, Shivram, Tyrneur or the British Government. The question of ruthless suppression of dissenting minorities, as raised by Gwynne, was completely baseless. Nowhere in his speeches or writings in course of his dwelling on the need of an authorita-

rian form of government in Free India, Subhas Chandra thought or said anything in this line. He was rather opposed to the suppression of minorities.

Thus, frankly speaking, his ideas stood for no dictatorship in the real and fullest sense of the term, but for an autocracy,—‘a benevolent autocracy’,¹²⁷ as N. N. Chakravarti puts it, or an ‘enlightened autocracy’,¹²⁸ as Lahiri says. An autocracy that was inevitable, to support the view of Jog, in an overbearing personality.¹²⁹ His idea was for a patriotic, benevolent dictatorship. . . .”, even Shivram seemed to mollify his tone later on.¹³⁰ His idea of dictatorship was here continuous, with a strong authority. “He saw it clearly,” as Frank points out, ‘that the Indian nation, which was composed of different racial and religious groups holding different ethical and moral values could only be integrated fully and assured of a happy future when all these elements could be brought within a free society under a certain authority.’¹³¹

S. A. Ayer, Minister of Publicity and Propaganda in the Azad Hind Government, makes the point more clear. Subhas Chandra, observes Ayer, was “a democrat in heart and dictator in effect.”¹³² This was certainly no way of describing him as a dictator. What Ayer meant by this reference was that there was an element of dictatorship in Subhas Chandra but that was “an intangible, elusive and inescapable part of him.”¹³³ And the democratic bias was so strong in him that he could never be really a dictator.

Ayer proceeds to elucidate his statement in the following manner : Subhas Chandra was a dictator in the sense that he did high-powered thinking, planning and working out of the minutest details with regard to every important matter, civil or military, occasionally sounding his inner ‘cabinet’ on broad policy and details. He convinced himself first of the wisdom of his move, the foolproof character of his planning and the practicability of its execution. Then he would take his own time to look at his plans and details from every possible angle, removed any defects that he discovered during the scrutiny and make the plan as near perfect as humanly

possible. And then he would go to his cabinet to explain his ideas. "The sheer boldness and majestic sweep of his planning admitted of little or no room for ordinary minds to suggest practical alternatives or worthwhile improvement. His planning was such that it deserved acceptance in toto. . . . His dictatorship was no bitter pill, for only in the most acceptable and happiest sense was he a dictator."¹³⁴

Thus he ordered his men that 'you shall lay down your lives on the road to Delhi', 'you shall keep up this struggle until India is free', 'you shall wipe out from your minds all thoughts of caste, creed or community'. "This was his dictate," Ayer points out. "But . . . no . . . fiat from a dictator, but inspiration from an Avatar"¹³⁵

Nay, on the other hand, transcending this intangible part of dictatorship, there was his dominating bias for democracy. He strictly adhered to a democratic procedure, Ayer points out. He would come to the Cabinet meeting or meeting of the Military High Command, prepared to explain the why and wherefore of his main ideas, listen attentively to the differing viewpoints of his colleagues, answer anyone of the objections, then, elucidate and elaborate every point of detail, and close by a convincing picture of the ultimate fruition of his plan.

He insisted on calling a meeting of the Cabinet every time policy was to be decided, and once the decision was officially taken by the Cabinet, then and then alone he would use discretion to speak in the name of the government in explaining the implications of such a decision, and the possibilities of success or failure of certain moves in pursuance of the decision. He always took particular care to put his Cabinet colleagues absolutely at ease by avoiding all signs of impatience, intolerance or resentment on questions of even entirely divergent views. He carefully listened to all the arguments marshalled in favour of the opposing view. "This was a real education in democracy to his colleagues. He never believed in confronting his colleagues with a *fait accompli* and then wangling their unwilling approval."¹³⁶

Ayer illustrates his case. Decisions or policy, major or minor, which Netaji brought before the Cabinet for full discussion and unanimous approval included those relating to the movement of the I.N.A. from Singapur to Burma, the renaming of the Andaman and Nicobar islands, the appointment of a Cabinet committee to report on the method of national unification in dress, food, greetings, ceremonies, the shifting of the headquarters of government from Malaya to Burma, creation of more ministries to intensify the total mobilisation programme, the granting of awards to those who sacrificed their all for the sake of the country and finally the matter of establishment of the sovereignty of the I.N.A. Government in regions liberated from the British occupation in India.

Thus "he could claim that in all essential matters," writes Ayer, "he carried his government and his I.N.A. associates with him. This did not mean that he never overruled an individual minister or an I.N.A. commander on an important issue. Indeed, he did so on a few occasions, but only after trying to convince the other man and never arbitrarily."¹³⁷

Thus, according to Ayer, Netaji as an administrator was a true democrat.

Another member of the I.N.A. Cabinet, Mrs. Lakshmi Sehgal also lends her opinion against any theory of dictatorship, when she said that "we do not have a one-man dictatorship. We are all fellow-fingers in the same field."¹³⁸

Another close associate of Netaji in Germany, Gunpuley, subscribes to the same contention. "Due to his having taken military means and adopted a uniform during the armed struggle in the Second World War, Subhas Bose has been often painted in the garb of a dictator But the description certainly misrepresents his great character,—determined, steadfast, even at times stubborn as he was, Subhas Bose was never dictatorial. In fact, beneath the steadfast frame of a great revolutionary, Subhas Bose carried a soft heart He was a man who carried his head on his palm for the sake of his country, but he shed tears if someone near to him broke a little

bone Subhas Bose's opponents have often charged him with having had ambitions to rule dictatorially. This is a great injustice. He never thought of absolute power for himself. He considered himself a part and parcel of a great national movement of which Mahatma Gandhi was the leader and he a faithful follower. It was not in Subhas Bose's nature to get things done by his people only on command. He was full of sweet reasonableness and often went out of his way to win over a small opponent. No one appeared to him so small as not to discuss with him his political or other problems. In reality, those who worked with Subhas Bose sometimes felt exasperated at his ultra-democratic method of handling things."¹³⁹

A. C. Chatterjee, Finance Minister in the I.N.A. Government, also refers to his spirit of political tolerance. "Netaji always stressed upon the practical development of love and respect between the officers and men of all denominations."¹⁴⁰ This tolerance and catholicity on his part, according to Chatterjee, went against any theory of Fascism. Indeed, ". . . he had never once made people who," observes D. K. Roy, "obeyed him, feel that they were his inferiors or subordinates. Those who during the last war dubbed Subhas Chandra as an intolerant Fascist . . . cannot have known him . . . he had never been moulded in the clay of the intolerant all-to-the-one-foldism of the Fascist philosophy."¹⁴¹

It is clear from the above discussion that Subhas Chandra had no inherent bias for dictatorship or authoritarianism. His views on the question of dictatorship in India were entirely determined by the question of expediency. To attribute a fascist colour to his ideas on the basis of his above references, therefore, is highly irregular; illogical and unscientific. It is also evident from the above discussion that he did not establish any dictatorship in the I.N.A. The I.N.A. Cabinet was not merely an advisory body, as Hugh Toye sees it, without any responsibility. Subhas Chandra's I.N.A. Government was based on the joint responsibility of himself and the Cabinet, as Ayer, Mrs. Sehgal and Chatterjee inform us. His rigid

adherence to a democratic process absolutely rules out any theory of dictatorship in this respect.

As to the Forward Bloc, it is equally ridiculous to ascribe an authoritarian character to it, inasmuch as it was formed and devoted to fight authoritarianism in the Congress and restore democracy within it and it rested "...on the basis of the eternal principles of liberty, democracy and socialism."¹⁴³

Thus with regard to the second theory—the theory of dictatorship—Subhas Chandra could not be described to have any fascist leaning. He was at best an autocrat of unbound personality, to put in the words of Ayer.¹⁴³

We now come to the third theory—the theory of militarism. There was a strong military bias in Subhas Chandra's character and ideas. He was firmly convinced that military power was an indispensable necessity for winning political power. If a nation wants to be independent, it was to be a strong military nation. If India was to win independence and preserve it she must have a strong, disciplined and organised army. "If India was to be a modern civilised nation," he thus observed as early as 1914, "she would have to pay the price, and she would not by any means shirk the physical and military problem. Those who worked for the country's emancipation would have to be prepared to take charge of both the civil and military administration. . . .The war had shown that a nation that did not possess military strength could not hope to preserve its independence."¹⁴⁴ "...He was imbued with the idea that in the moral and intellectual sphere, in the domain of philosophy and culture and almost everywhere else, excepting physical strength, Indians were in no way inferior to the British people."¹⁴⁵

Thus according to Subhas Chandra, military training and military power were indispensable necessities for the Indians to build up their life and character and to vindicate their honour and prestige, and "it was in order to meet insults from the Britishers by physical force as also to remove the stigma heaped on the Bengali character by Macaulay and

to foil the policy of the Government of excluding the Bengalis from the army that Subhas Chandra tried to acquire military training."¹⁴⁶

It was out of this military knack that he grumbled against the discriminatory policy followed by the authorities at the P.E. School, where he studied in his early years, that the Anglo-Indian boys could join the voluntary corps and shoulder a rifle, but the Indians could not. It was from the same viewpoint that he strongly resented the decision of the India Office at Cambridge refusing to enlist the Indians in the University Officers' Training Corps. "The matter was brought before the Indian majlis and it was decided to take the matter up with the Secretary of State for India, and Mr. K. L. Gamba and I were authorised to interview him if necessary. . . . We were more interested in getting the training than in joining the army as a profession. . . . (but) our demands were not met by the authorities."¹⁴⁷

It is to be noted in this connection that there was not yet any political bias in his mind behind this interest for military training. It was essentially an academic interest—an interest of getting military training for the sake of building up body and mind, life and character as sufficiently strong and disciplined, to overcome any physical challenge and disprove the British notion that Bengalis were a weak and timid race. It was essentially an academic conviction that a nation's independence is largely determined by its military potentiality.

It was after joining the Indian National Congress that this militaristic bias began to assume a political hue for the first time. He was now convinced that India was to be a mighty military nation to expel the British, one of the mightiest military races, and conquer independence from them. His association with the Volunteer Corps of the Congress came as a fitting responsibility, and what magnificent countenance he displayed as the G.O.C. of the corps in the 43rd session of the Indian National Congress. "He stood masterly as a commander He looked every inch a general self-satisfaction of a hero unmistakably stamped on his face and figure It was a

sight—No !. It was vision—A promise of the future.”¹⁴⁸ “Even then he was,” writes K. C. Ghosh, “a Netaji”.¹⁴⁹

Subhas Chandra emphasised the indispensable necessity of a military set-up of national unity—and in this connection he urged for the establishment of a Citizens’ Defence Corps. “We should push with our scheme of a Citizens’ Defence Corps Its task will be merely to help in maintaining internal peace, harmony and goodwill, so that Indians may not quarrel or fight among themselves at the time when they should concentrate on winning freedom for India.”¹⁵⁰ It is on such a militaristic foundation that he raised his Forward Bloc, Free India Army and the I.N.A. which stood for a bold, dynamic, revolutionary and militant struggle against the British. In a statement issued on 26.7.39, he himself referred to the Forward Bloc as the protagonist of a ‘forward and militant policy’.¹⁵¹ “A revolutionary and dynamic organisation,”¹⁵² “the Forward Bloc stands for something bold and dynamic—something forward and progressive. . . .” he said, “prepared to go ahead and launch a struggle”¹⁵³

This concept of the Forward Bloc was largely based on the similar image of Samyavadi Sangha, a strong and centralised party bound together by military discipline envisaged by him as an indispensable requisite for India to conduct her militant struggle against the British, and holding India together and preventing a chaos when Indians would be free and thrown entirely on their own resources. Subhas Chandra felt the necessity, against the background of the passive and pacific non-violent struggle under the Mahatma, of a more militant policy to attain freedom. He was convinced that “. . . the form of non-co-operation will have to be changed into a more militant one”¹⁵⁴ He visualised the need of a militant nationalist party, projected in the image of his Samyavadi Sangha to launch such a militant movement. With the foundation of the Forward Bloc his theory of the Samyavadi Sangha was translated into practice. Subhas Chandra was thoroughly convinced that the Gandhite Congress would never take up a militant attitude or start a revolutionary movement,

which could alone, according to him, throw out the British rule. The scope of success of the Forward Bloc was strictly limited because of opposition both from the British and the Indian National Congress. Hence the need, he felt, of going abroad and raise an army of liberation with foreign military help in a country hostile to Britain. This drew him to the Fascist Powers. He believed that "Fascism is essentially militarism," as he told Alfred Tyrneuer, "it will inevitably lead to a new world war and will offer India a unique opportunity to emancipate herself from the British yoke. I believe in war and revolution, if you pacifists prefer to put it that way, I believe in human sacrifice."¹⁵⁵ Hence his Free India Army in Germany and the I.N.A. in Japan. The Free India Army was formed out of the Indian Prisoners of War fighting in favour of the British and captured in Germany and Italy, whose objective was to expel the British from India with the help of the Tripartite Powers, under the initiative of Germany. A Free India Government was formed to conduct this revolutionary war and "... actively promote revolution in India as its contribution to the common fight against the English."¹⁵⁶ "We shall take freedom by the strength of our arms," he declared. "Freedom is never given. It is taken."¹⁵⁷ When his plan in Germany did not materialise, he left for Japan and raised his I.N.A. in East Asia, with Japanese assistance—an army formed to conquer independence from the ruthless British, by a militant, determined and equally ruthless struggle. The very inception of the I.N.A., was in accordance with his militaristic ideal of nationalism. It was conceived in line with his plan of revolution in Germany, although on a far greater scale. "It was born to kindle to white the flames of militant nationalism."¹⁵⁸ The I.N.A. was formed, he declared, "... with the object of crushing the Anglo-American forces of making India really an India for the Indians by liberating her from the shackles of the despotic rule under which she has been groaning for ages ; of bringing complete freedom and peace and order to three hundred and eighty million of our brothers and sisters in India"¹⁵⁹

To achieve this, Netaji exhorted the I.N.A. soldiers: "We have to give our blood and take the blood of our enemies. Therefore let your slogan, your battle-cry be . . . be blood, blood and blood."¹⁶⁰ Thus the I.N.A. war was a fitting complement to the revolutionary movement of the Forward Bloc and Free India Army—the swan song of his militant nationalism.

The militaristic bias was also a determining factor in his plan and programme of reconstruction of Free India. Free India, he feared, would present a formidable problem which was to be tackled by nothing but a militant method. Chaos and confusion that were to raise their heads on the crest of new India were to be crushed with military force and discipline. "If our leaders are not trained for post-war leadership . . . there is every possibility that after the conquest of power a period of chaos will set in It should therefore be clear that the generals of the war-time period in India will have to carry through the whole programme of post-war reform in order to justify to their countrymen the hopes and aspirations that they will have to rouse during the fight. The task of these leaders will not be over till a new generation of men and women are educated and trained after the establishment of the new state and this new generation are able to take complete charge of their country's affairs."¹⁶¹

Nay, even after this takes place, India should be governed, he suggests, by a military autocracy until the establishment of order and stability.

This was, from Subhas Chandra's point of view, the military phase in the reconstruction of modern India, or in the evolution of a socialist state in Free India.

Thus there was a predominantly militaristic bias in his character and ideas. But this bias for militarism was not equivalent to a bias for Fascism. It was only the underlying military discipline and power of Fascism that appealed to him. He had no political or personal bias for Fascism; as we have seen above, as a political system, rather he was opposed to it. His concept of militarism stood essentially for nationalism.

In spite of the militaristic character of the Forward Bloc, it could not be seen as a fascistic organisation. The characterisation of the Bloc as a fascist body by the Congress is purely fictitious and motivated. This allegation was largely the product of two factors.

From the ideological viewpoint, the Gandhite Congress fundamentally differed from the Forward Bloc. The Congress was wedded to non-violence, compromise and constitutionalism, and the militant method of struggle espoused by the Forward Bloc was deemed by them to be an unnecessary overgrowth of revolutionary mentality and militancy. Hence they opposed it and vilified it as a fascist organisation, as the protagonist, of violence and war. That they were further alarmed and annoyed at the war of criticism levelled against them by the Bloc, they were vociferous in their said allegation against the Bloc to tarnish its image.

We should spurn the Congress allegations as illogical, prejudiced and vindictive. The Forward Bloc was "a revolutionary party in that its primary function was to accelerate India's march towards freedom, but it was not a vanguard of armed violence".¹⁶² The Forward Bloc, Subhas Chandra points out, was fighting for democracy within the Congress and outside—fighting for a composite Cabinet, freedom of speech for the members of the party and freedom of the masses. The two fundamental principles that led him to resign from the Congress and form the Forward Bloc, he points out in an address, were democracy within the Congress and resistance to the Federal scheme. It was the Congress, he says, who were rather to be branded as Fascists.¹⁶³ "The social democratic leadership of Gandhi failed and . . . on the crest of its grave errors appeared the prodigious evil of Hitlerite Fascism."¹⁶⁴ "If by Fascism," he further states, "is indicated those who call themselves Hitler, super-Hitler or budding-Hitler, then one may say these specimens of humanity are to be found in the rightist camp."¹⁶⁵

Thus he "was opposed to Hitlerism whether in India within the Congress, or in other country. . . ."¹⁶⁶ And it

was to fight this fascistic tendency of the Gandhite Congress that the Forward Bloc was born.

Again, Hiralal Seth's opinion that the Forward Bloc had a near-fascist character and stood for a synthesis between fascism and socialism, because "it believed in leadership principle, organisation of the youth, military discipline, in changing the standard of living of the workers and peasants to a high-level, one party state. . . ." ¹⁶⁷ is not also tenable. The Bloc stood certainly for socialism as we have seen in Part I, but this concept of socialism was a democratic socialism, and it did not denote any synthesis between socialism and fascism. "The Forward Bloc was not based on leader principle, nor did it ever espouse dictatorship," observes Jog. ¹⁶⁸

More, repudiation of parliamentary democracy, dictatorship of a party (permanently) and ruthless suppression of dissenting minorities—the fundamental postulates of fascism, were not present in the concept of the Forward Bloc or the Samyavadi Sangha, as we have seen it in Part I. Thus there was no fascistic overtone in either of the two. So far as the Free India Army and the I.N.A. were concerned, it is ludicrous to think of them having a fascist character. An army or a government whose character was essentially democratic as we have seen earlier they being based on liberty, equality, fraternity and justice ". . . an army that will have only one goal namely—the freedom of India . . .," ¹⁶⁹ a government that thought of itself as ". . . the only lawful government of the Indian people," ¹⁷⁰ could never be anything fascist in character. Militarism was the first and the last word of the Free India Army and the I.N.A.—but that was not the naked, aggressive and imperialistic militarism of fascism but a militarism that denoted a dogged determination, a spirit of sacrifice, a military discipline, an unselfish heroism, a revolutionary ardour of freedom and nationalism, a defensive war of independence waged by a revolutionary army which had only one objective, ". . . only one will namely—to do or die in the cause of India's freedom." ¹⁷¹ And their leader? "There was no lack of physical courage, he could stand as straight as

any under aerial bombs or bullets."¹⁷² This moral or spiritual character of the I.N.A. militarism, "... a triumph of the forces of spiritualism over militarism",¹⁷³ distinguishes itself from the imperialistic and ruthless character of the fascist militarism.

Moreover, in the case of the Free India Army or the I.N.A., militarism was a matter of dire necessity—a necessity to boost up the morale of a nation wedded to non-violence, and arm it with military strength, courage and power, to enable it to face the challenge of its adversary. A necessity all the more as the enemy was one of the mightiest military powers—Great Britain, and the only way out for India to save herself against the British was to give a gallant battle. "The enemy that has drawn the sword must be fought with the sword."¹⁷⁴ This defensive character of the militarism of the Free India Army or the I.N.A. also differentiates itself from the aggressive militarism of the Fascist Powers. Again, in Netaji's concept of militarism, there was no racial factor as one may find in Fascism.

Thus the concept of militarism behind the Forward Bloc, Samyavadi Sangha, Free India Army and the Indian National Army, was equivalent to nationalism or patriotism. The struggle they stood for was a patriotic or national struggle, a national war, with the objective of winning national independence.

With regard to his plan of reconstruction of future India, his idea of militarism was also a nationalistic consideration, and this is to be seen from three angles.

It was from a purely nationalistic viewpoint that Subhas Chandra stressed the need of a military take-over of the administration in Free India after freedom to be followed by a military dictatorship for some years to come. At the end of a revolutionary war a trained hand was necessary to meet the fluid situation in India in that period of transition. In absence of any trained political leadership, military leadership was at the outset necessary in national interest to tide over the crisis of transition. The political leaders having had their proper

training in the art of administration, the military administration would voluntarily give way to civil administration.

At the end of the British rule in India followed by the birth of a new state, it was natural that disorder and confusion would raise their heads and with them multifarious problems requiring urgent reform in different fields. To quell this anarchy, restore order and stability and to make a bold push ahead with a programme of reform an iron hand was necessary. "The ills could be removed, the many social and religious components held together, and India turned into a modern industrial democracy only by a very strong authority," even Hugh Toye admits it, "acting on a well-made long-prepared plan".¹⁷⁵ Hence, the need of a military dictatorship only for the sake of national unity, stability and progress. It was also to be a temporary period of dictatorship and was to step down voluntarily as soon as order was restored and the reform programme was well on the way, to pave the way for democracy and socialism.

Thus here militarism was a means to an end according to his concept of political thought, a guiding line for the national reconstruction of Free India.

It is, therefore, conclusively proved from the above discussion that Subhas Chandra's concept of militarism was synonymous with nationalism, and therefore, cannot be equated with Fascism.

Thus at the end of the controversial discussion over the question of Subhas Chandra *vs.* Fascism, we find it crystal clear that he, by no means, on the strength of none of the above three theories, can be described as a Fascist.

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